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JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

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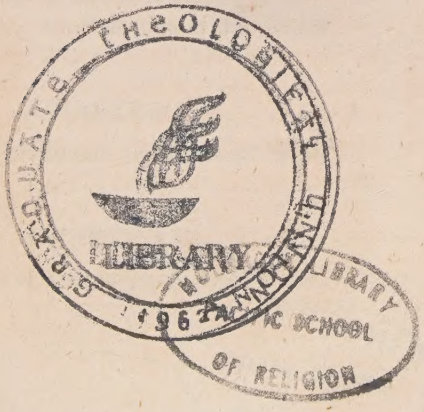

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Geo. Dr. F. Folsom

AN ESSAY

ON THE

NATURE AND IMMUTABILITY

OF

TRUTH,

IN OPPOSITION TO

SOPHISTRY AND SCEPTICISM.

Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapientia dicit.

JUVENAL.

AN

ESSAY ON TRUTH.

PART III.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

THEY who consider virtue as a subject of mere curiosity, and think that the principles of morals and properties of conick sections ought to be explained with the same degree of apathy and indifference, will find abundant matter for censure in the preceding observations. As the author is not very ambitious of the good opinion of such theorists, he will not give himself much trouble in multiplying apologies for what, to them, may have the appearance of keenness or severity in the animadversions he has hitherto made, or may hereafter make, on the principles of certain noted philosophers. He considers happiness as the end and aim of our being; and he thinks philosophy valuable only so far as it may be conducive to this end. Human happiness seemeth to him whol-

ly unattainable, except by the means that virtue and religion provide. He is therefore persuaded, that while employed in pleading the cause of virtue, and of true science, its best auxiliary, he supports, in some measure, the character of a friend to humankind; and he would think his right to that glorious appellation extremely questionable, if the warmth of his zeal did not bear some proportion to the importance of his cause. However suspicious he may be of his ability to vindicate the rights of his fellow-creatures, he is not suspicious of his inclination. He feels, that, on such a subject, he must speak from the heart, or not speak at all. For the genius and manner of his discourse he has no other apology to offer: and by every person of spirit, candour, and benevolence, he is sure that this apology will be deemed sufficient.

As to the principles and matter of it, he is less confident. These, though neither visionary nor unimportant, may possibly be misunderstood. He therefore begs leave to urge a few things, for the further vindication and illustration of them. To his own mind they are fully satisfactory; he hopes to render them equally so to every candid reader. Happy! if he should be as successful in establishing conviction as others have been in subverting it.

CHAPTER I.

Further Remarks on the Consistency of these Principles with the Interests of Science and the Rights of Mankind.

IT may possibly be objected to this discourse, That "it tends to discourage freedom of inquiry, "and to promote implicit faith."

But nothing is more contrary to my design; as those who attend, without prejudice, to the full import of what I have advanced on the subject of evidence, will undoubtedly perceive. Let me be permitted to repeat, that the truths in which man is most concerned do not lie exceedingly deep; nor are we to estimate either their importance, or their certainty, by the length of the line of our investigation. The evidences of the philosophy of human nature are found in our own breast; we need not roam abroad in quest of them; the unlearned are judges of them as well as the learned. Ambiguities have arisen when the feelings of the heart and understanding were expressed in words; but the feelings themselves were not ambiguous. Let a man attentively examine himself,

with a sincere purpose of discovering the truth, and without any bias in favour of particular theories, and he will seldom be at a loss in regard to those truths, at least that are most essential to his happiness and duty. If men must needs amuse themselves with metaphysical investigation, let them apply it, where it can do no harm, to the distinctions and logomachies of ontology. In the science of human nature it cannot do good, but must of necessity do great harm. What avail the obscure deductions of verbal argument, in illustrating what we sufficiently know by experience? or in showing that to be fictitious and false, whose energy we must feel and acknowledge every moment? When therefore I find a pretended principle of human nature evinced by a dark and intricate investigation, I am tempted to suspect, not without reason, that its evidence is nowhere to be found but in the arguments of the theorist; and these, when disguised by quaint distinctions, and ambiguous language, it is sometimes hard to confute, even when the heart recoils from the doctrine with contempt or detestation. If the doctrine be true, it must also be agreeable to experience: to experience, therefore, let the appeal be made; let the circumstances be pointed out, in which the controverted sentiment arises, or is supposed to arise. This is to act the philosopher,

not the metaphysician; the interpreter of nature, not the builder of systems. But let us consider the objection more particularly.

What then do you mean by that implicit faith, to which you suppose these principles too favourable? Do you mean an acquiescence in the dictates of our own understanding, or in those of others? If the former, I must tell you, that such implicit faith is the only kind of belief which true philosophy recommends. I have already remarked, that, while man continues in his present state, our own intellectual feelings are, and must be, the standard of truth to us. All evidence productive of belief, is resolvable into the evidence of consciousness; and comes at last to this point, I believe because I believe, or because the law of rational nature determines me to believe. This belief may be called implicit; but it is the only rational belief of which we are capable: and to say, that our minds ought not to submit to it, is as absurd as to say, that our bodies ought not to be nourished with food. Revelation itself must be attended with evidence to satisfy consciousness or common sense; otherwise it can never be rationally believed. By the evidence of the gospel, the rational Christian is persuaded that it comes from God. He acquiesces in it as truth, not be-

cause it is recommended by others, but because it satisfies his own understanding.

But if, by implicit faith, you mean, what I think is commonly meant by that term, an unwarrantable or unquestioned acquiescence in the sentiments of other men, I deny that any part of this discourse hath a tendency to promote it. I never said, that doctrines are to be taken for granted without examination; though I affirmed, that, in regard to moral doctrines, a long and intricate examination is neither necessary nor expedient. With moral truth, it is the business of every man to be acquainted; and therefore the Deity has made it level to every capacity.

Far be it from a lover of truth to discourage freedom of inquiry! Man is possessed of reasoning powers; by means of which he may bring that within the sphere of common sense, which was originally beyond it. Of these powers he may and ought to avail himself; for many important truths are not self-evident, and our faculties were not designed for a state of inactivity. But neither were they designed to be employed in fruitless or dangerous investigation. Our knowledge and capacity are limited; it is fit and necessary they should be so: we need not wander into forbidden paths, or attempt to penetrate inaccessible regions in quest of employment; the culti-

vation of useful and practical science, the improvements of arts, and the indispensable duties of life, will furnish ample scope to all the exertions of human genius. Surely that man is my friend, who dissuades me from attempting what I cannot perform, nor even attempt without danger. And is not he a friend to science and mankind, who endeavours to discourage fallacious and unprofitable speculation, and to propose a criterion by which it may be known and avoided?

But if reasoning ought not to be carried beyond a certain boundary, and if it is the authority of common sense that fixeth this boundary, and if it be possible to mistake a prejudice for a principle of common sense, how (it may be said) are prejudices to be detected? At this rate a man has nothing to do, but to call his prejudice a dictate of common sense, and then it is established in perfect security, beyond the reach of argument. Does not this furnish a pretence for limiting the freedom of inquiry? Having already said a great deal in answer to the first part of this question, I need not now say much in answer to the last. I shall only ask, on the other hand, what method of reasoning is the properest for overcoming the prejudices of an obstinate man? Are we to wrangle with him *in infinitum*, without ever arriving at any fixed principle? That surely is not the

way to illustrate truth, or rectify errour. Do we mean to ascertain the importance of our arguments by their number, and to pronounce that the better cause whose champion gives the last word? This, I fear, would not mend the matter. Suppose our antagonist should deny a self-evident truth, or refuse his assent to an intuitive probability; must we not refer him to the common sense of mankind? If we do not, we must either hold our peace, or have recourse to sophistry: for when a principle comes to be intuitively true or false, all legitimate reasoning is at an end and all further reasoning impertinent. To the common sense of mankind we must therefore refer him sooner or later; and if he continue obstinate, we must leave him. Is it not then of consequence to truth, and may it not serve to prevent many a sophistical argument, and unprofitable logomachy, that we have it continually in view, that common sense is the standard of truth? a maxim, which men are not always disposed to admit in its full latitude, and which, in the heat and hurry of dispute, they are apt to overlook altogether. Some men will always be found who think the most absurd prejudices founded in common sense. Reasonable men never scruple to submit their prejudices or principles to examination: but if that examination turn to

no account, or if it turn to a bad account; if it only puzzle where it ought to convince, and darken what it ought to illustrate; if it recommend impracticable modes of action, or inconceivable modes of thought; I must confess I cannot perceive the use of it. This is the only kind of reasoning that I mean to discourage. It is this kind of reasoning that has proved so fatal to the abstract sciences. In it all our sceptical systems are founded; of it they consist; and by it they are supported. Till the abstract sciences be cleared of this kind of reasoning, they deserve not the name of philosophy: they may amuse a weak and turbulent mind, and render it still weaker and more turbulent; but they cannot convey any real instruction: they may undermine the foundations of virtue and science; but they cannot illustrate a single truth, nor establish one principle of importance, nor improve the mind of man in any respect whatsoever.

By some it may be thought an objection to the principles of this essay, "That they seem to re-"commend a method of confutation which is "not strictly according to logick, and do actually "contradict some of the established laws of that "science."

It will readily be acknowledged, that many of the maxims of the school logick are founded in

truth and nature, and have so long obtained universal approbation, that they are now become proverbial in philosophy. Many of its rules and distinctions are extremely useful, not so much for strengthening the judgment, as for enabling the disputant quickly to comprehend, and perspicuously to express, in what the force or fallacy of an argument consists. The groundwork of this science, the Logick of Aristotle, if we may judge of the whole by the part now extant, is one of the most successful and most extraordinary efforts of philosophick genius that ever appeared in the world. And yet, if we consider this science, with regard to its design and consequences, we shall perhaps see reason to think, that a strict observance of its laws is not always necessary to the discovery of truth.

It was originally intended as a help to discourse among a talkative and sprightly people. The constitution of Athens made publick speaking of great importance, and almost a certain road to preferment or distinction. This was also in some measure the case at Rome; but the Romans were more reserved, and did not, till about the time of Cicero, think of reducing conversation or publick speaking to rule. The vivacity of the Athenians, encouraged by their democratical spirit, made them fond of disputes and de-

clamations, which were often carried on without any view to discover truth, but merely to gratify humour, give employment to the tongue, and amuse a vacant hour. Some of the dialogues of Plato are to be considered in this light, rather as exercises in declamation, than serious disquisitions in philosophy. It is true, this is not the only merit even of such of them as seem the least considerable. If we are often dissatisfied with his doctrine; if we have little curiosity to learn the characters and manners of that age, whereof he has given so natural a representation; we must yet acknowledge, that as models for elegance and simplicity of composition, the most inconsiderable of Plato's dialogues are very useful and ingenious. His speakers often compliment each other on the beauty of their style, even when there is nothing very striking in the sentiment.* If, therefore, we would form a just estimate of Plato, we must regard him not only as a philosopher, but also as a rhetorician; for it is evident he was ambitious to excel in both characters. But it appears not to have been his opinion, that the practice of extemporary speaking and disputing, so frequent in his time, had any

* See the Symposium. Platonis opera, vol. 3. p. 198. Edit. Serran.

direct tendency to promote the investigation of truth, or the acquisition of wisdom. The Lacedemonians, the most reserved and most silent people in Greece, and who made the least pretensions to a literary character, were, in his judgment, a nation, not only of the wisest men, but of the greatest philosophers. Their words were few, their address not without rusticity; but the meanest of them was able, by a single expression, dexterously aimed, and seasonably introduced, to make the stranger with whom he conversed appear no wiser than a child.*

The Athenians, accustomed to reduce every thing to art, and among whom the spirit of science was more prevalent than in any other nation, had contrived a kind of technical logick long before the days of Aristotle. Their sophists taught it in conjunction with rhetorick and philosophy. But Aristotle brought it to perfection, and seems to have been the first who professedly disjoined it from the other arts and sciences. On his logick was founded that of the schoolmen. But

* Εἴ τις εἰδείη Λακεδαιμονίων τῷ ῥαυλοτάτῳ συγγενέσθαι τὰ μὲν πολλὰ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐυρήσει αὐτὸν φαῦλον τινα φαινόμενον, ἔπειτα ὅπου ἂν τυχοι τῶν λεγομένων, ἐνιβαλε ῥῆμα ἀξιον λογου βραχὺ καὶ συνεστραμμένον, ὥσπερ δεινὸς ἀκοντιστὴς· ὥστε φαίνεσθαι τὸν προσδιαλεγόμενον παιδος μηδὲν βελτίω.

Socrates in Plat. Protogora, vol. 1. p. 342.

they, like other commentators, often misunderstood the text, and often perverted it to the purpose of a favourite system. They differed from one another in their notions of Aristotle's doctrine, ranged themselves into sects and parties; and instead of explaining the principles of their master, made it their sole business to comment upon one another. Now and then men of learning arose, who endeavoured to revive the true peripatetick philosophy; but their efforts, instead of proving successful, served only to provoke persecution; and at length the scholastic system grew so corrupt, and at the same time so enormous in magnitude, that it became an insuperable incumbrance to the understanding, and contributed not a little to perpetuate the ignorance and barbarism of those times. The chief aim of the old logick, even in its purest form, (so far at least as it was a practical science) was to render men expert in arguing readily on either side of any question. But it is one thing to employ our faculties in searching after truth, and a very different thing to employ them equally in defence of truth and of errour: and the same modification of intellect that fits a man for the one, will by no means qualify him for the other. Nay, if I mistake not, the talents that fit us for discovering truth are rather hurt than improved by the practice of sophistry.

To argue against one's own conviction, must always have a bad effect on the heart, and render one more indifferent about the truth, and perhaps more incapable of perceiving it.*

To dispute readily on either side of any question, is admired by some as a very high accomplishment: but it is what any person of moderate abilities may easily acquire by a little practice. Perhaps moderate abilities are the most favourable to the acquisition of this talent. Sensibility and penetration, the inseparable attendants, or rather the most essential parts, of true genius, qualify a man for discovering truth with little labour of investigation; and at the same time interest him so deeply in it, that he cannot bear to turn his view to the other side of the question. Thus he never employs himself in devising arguments; and, therefore, seldom arrives at any proficiency in that exercise. But the man of slow intellect and dull imagination advances step by step in his inquiries, without any keenness of sentiment, or ardour of fancy, to distract his attention; and without that instantaneous anticipation of consequences, that leads the man of genius to the conclu-

* See the story of Pertinax in the Rambler, No. 95; where the effects of habitual disputation, in perverting the judgment and vitiating the heart, are illustrated with the utmost energy and elegance.

sion, even before he has examined all the intermediate relations. Hence he naturally acquires a talent for minute observation, and for a patient examination of circumstances; at the same time that his insensibility prevents his interesting himself warmly on either side, and leaves him leisure to attend equally to his own arguments, and to those of the antagonist. This gives him eminent superiority in a dispute, and fits him, not indeed for discovering truth, but for baffling an adversary, and supporting a system.

I have been told, that Newton, the first time he read Euclid's Elements, perceived instantly, and almost intuitively, the truth of the several propositions, before he consulted the proof. Such vivacity and strength of judgment are extraordinary: and indeed, in the case of mathematical and physical truths, we are seldom to expect this instantaneous anticipation of consequences, even from men of more than moderate talents. But in moral subjects, and in most of the matters that are debated in conversation, there is rarely any need of comparing a great number of intermediate relations: every person of sound judgment sees the truth at once: or, if he does not, it is owing to his ignorance of some facts or circumstances, which may be soon learned from a plain narrative, but which are disguised and confound-

ed more and more by wrangling and contradiction. If there be no means of clearing the disputed facts and difficulties, it would not, I presume be imprudent to drop the subject and talk of something else.

It is pleasant enough to hear the habitual wrangler endeavouring to justify his conduct by a pretence of zeal for the truth. It is not the love of truth, but of victory, that engages him in disputation. I have witnessed many contests of this kind; but have seldom seen them lead, or even tend, to any useful discovery. Where ostentation, self-conceit, or love of paradox, are not concerned, they commonly arise from some verbal ambiguity, or from the misconception of some fact, which both parties taking it for granted that they perfectly understand, are at no pains to ascertain: and, when once begun, are, by the vanity or obstinacy of the speakers, or perhaps by their mere love of speaking, continued, till accident put an end to them, by silencing the parties, rather than reconciling their opinions. I once saw a number of persons, neither unlearned nor ill bred, meet together to pass a social evening. As ill luck would have it, a dispute arose about the propriety of a certain *manoeuvre* at *quadrille*, in which some of the company had been interested the night before. Two parties of disputants were

immediately formed; and the matter was warmly argued from six o'clock till midnight, when the company broke up. Being no adept in cards, I could not enter into the merits of the cause, nor take any part in the controversy; but I observed, that each of the speakers persisted to the last in the opinion he took up at the beginning, in which he seemed to be rather confirmed than staggered by the arguments that had been urged in opposition. With such enormous waste of time, with such vile prostitution of reason and speech, with such wanton indifference to the pleasures of friendship, all disputes are not attended; but most of them, if I mistake not, will be found to be equally unprofitable.

I grant, that much of our knowledge is gathered from our intercourse with one another; but I cannot think, that we are greatly indebted to the argumentative part of conversation; and nobody will say, that the most disputatious companions are the most agreeable. For my own part, I have always found those to be the most delightful and most improving conversations, in which there was the least contradiction; every person entertaining the utmost possible respect both for the judgment and for the veracity of his associate; and none assuming any of those dictatorial airs, which are so offensive to the

lovers of liberty, modesty, and friendship. If a catalogue were to be made of all the truths that have been discovered by wrangling in company, or by solemn disputation in the schools, I believe it would appear, that the contending parties might have been employed as advantageously to mankind, and much more so to themselves, in whipping a top or brandishing a rattle.

The extravagant fondness of the Stoicks for logical quibbles is one of the most disagreeable peculiarities in the writings of that sect. Every body must have been disgusted with it in reading some passages of the conversations of Epictetus preserved by Arrian; and must be satisfied, that it tended rather to weaken and bewilder, than to improve the understanding. One could hardly believe to what ridiculous excess they carried it. There was a famous problem among them called the *Pseudomenos*, which was to this purpose. "When a man says, *I lie*, does he lie, or does "he not? If he lies, he speaks truth: if he speaks "truth, he lies." Many were the books that their philosophers wrote, in order to solve this wonderful problem. Chrysippus favoured the world with no fewer than six: and Philetas studied himself to death in his attempts to solve it. Epictetus, whose good sense often triumphs over the ex-

travagance of stoicism, justly ridicules this logical phrenzy.*

Socrates made little account of the subtleties of logick; being more solicitous to instruct others, than to distinguish himself.† He inferred his doctrine from the concessions of those with whom he conversed; so that he left no room for dispute, as the adversary could not contradict him, without contradicting himself. And yet, to Socrates philosophy is perhaps more indebted, than to any other person whatever.‡

* Arrian, lib. 2. cap. 17. Cicero Lucull. cap. 30.

† Supra, part 2. chap. 2. sect. 1.

‡ Cicero in one place (de Finib. lib. 2.) calls him *parens philosophiæ*, and in another (de Orat. lib. 3.) affirms, that, in the judgment of all Greece, and according to the testimony of all the learned, Socrates, on every subject to which he applied himself, excelled all men, in wisdom, politeness, and penetration, as well as in copiousness and variety of eloquence; and that succeeding philosophers, though they differed widely in their principles, were however ambitious to be thought to belong to the Socratick school, and willing to believe that they derived their doctrines from that great seminary of knowledge. Socrates was the first Grecian philosopher who made experience the groundwork of all his reasonings, who applied philosophy to the regulation of human conduct, and who taught, that those theories only were valuable, which could be applied to practical and useful purposes. The more we consider

We have therefore no reason to think, that truth is discoverable by those means only which the technical logick prescribes. Aristotle knew the theory both of sophisms and syllogisms, better than any other man; yet Aristotle himself is sometimes imposed on by sophisms of his own invention.* And it is remarkable, that his moral, rhetorical, and political writings, in which his own excellent judgment is little warped by logical subtleties, are far the most useful, and, in point of sound reasoning, the most unexceptionable, part of his philosophy.

the state of learning at the time of his appearance, and the pride and insignificancy of those sophists, whom Greece then regarded as the oracles of wisdom, and to whose character and profession his conduct as a publick teacher formed so striking a contrast, the more we shall be sensible of our obligations to this great and excellent man, who was said to have brought philosophy down from heaven; and who may truly be said to have

..... turn'd the *reasoning* art
From words to things, from fancy to the heart.

* Thus he is said to have proved the earth to be the centre of the universe by the following sophism. "Heavy "bodies naturally tend to the centre of the universe; we "know by experience, that heavy bodies tend to the "centre of the earth; therefore the centre of the earth "is the same with that of the universe." Which is what the logicians call *petitio principii*, or *begging the question*.

The apparent tendency of the school logick is, to render men disputatious and sceptical, adepts in the knowledge of words, but inattentive to fact and experience. It makes them fonder of speaking than thinking, and therefore strangers to themselves; solicitous chiefly about rules, names and distinctions, and therefore leaves them neither leisure nor inclination for the study of life and manners. In a word, it makes them more ambitious to distinguish themselves as the partisans of a dogmatist, than as inquirers after truth. It is easy to see how far a man of this temper is qualified to make discoveries in knowledge. To such a man, indeed, the name of truth is only a pretence: he neither is, nor can be, much interested in the solidity or importance of his tenets; it is enough if he can render them plausible; nay, it is enough if he can silence his adversary by any means. The captious turn of an habitual wrangler deadens the understanding, sours the temper, and hardens the heart: by rendering the mind suspicious, and attentive to trifles, it weakens the sagacity of instinct, and extinguishes the fire of imagination; it transforms conversation into a state of warfare; and restrains those lively sallies of fancy, so effectual in promoting good humour and good will, which, though often erroneous, are a thousand

times more valuable than the dull correctness of a mood and figure disciplinarian.

One of the first maxims of the school logick is, That nothing is to be believed, but what we can give a reason for believing; a maxim destructive of all truth and science, as hath been fully shown in the former part of this discourse. We must not, however, lay this maxim to the charge of the ancient logick. Des Cartes, and the modern scepticks, got it from the schoolmen, who forged it out of some passages of Aristotle misunderstood. The philosopher said indeed, that all investigation should begin with doubt; but this doubt is to remain only till the understanding be convinced; which, in Aristotle's judgment, may be effected by intuitive evidence as well as by argumentative. The doctrine we have been endeavouring to illustrate, tends not to encourage any prejudices, or any opinions, unfriendly to truth or virtue: its only aim is, to establish the authority of those instinctive principles of conviction and assent, which the rational part of mankind have acknowledged in all ages, and which the condition of man, in respect both of action and intelligence, renders it absurd not to acknowledge. We cannot suppose, that the human mind, unlike to all other natural systems, is made up of

incompatible principles; in it, as in all the rest, there must be unity of design; and therefore the principles of human belief, and of human action, must have one and the same tendency. But many of our modern philosophers teach a different doctrine; endeavouring to persuade themselves, and others, that they ought not to believe what they cannot possibly disbelieve; and that those actions may be absurd, and contrary to truth, the performance of which is necessary to our very existence. If they will have it, that this is philosophy, I shall not dispute about the word; but I insist on it, that all such philosophy is no better than pedantick nonsense; and that, if a man were to write a book, to prove, that fire is the element in which we ought to live, he would not act more absurdly, than some metaphysicians of these times would be thought to have acted, if their works were understood, and rated according to their intrinsick merit.

That every thing may be made matter of dispute, is another favourite maxim of the school logick; and it would not be easy to devise one more detrimental to true science. What a strange propensity these doctors have had to disputation! One would think, that, in their judgment, "the chief end of man is, to contradict his neighbour, and wrangle with him

" for ever." To attempt a proof of what I know to be false, and a confutation of what I know to be true, is an exercise from which I can never expect advantage so long as I deem rationality a blessing. I never heard it prescribed as a recipe for strengthening the sight, to keep constantly blindfolded in the daytime and put on spectacles when we go to sleep; nor can I imagine how the ear of a musician could be improved, by his playing frequently on an ill tuned fiddle. And yet the schoolmen seem to have thought, that the more we shut our eyes against the truth, we shall the more distinctly perceive it; and that the oftener we practise falsehood, we shall be the more sagacious in detecting, and the more hearty in abhorring it. To suppose, that we may make every thing matter of dispute, is to suppose, that we can account for every thing. Alas! in most cases, to feel and believe, is all we have to do, or can do. Destined for action, rather than for knowledge, and governed more by instinct than by reason, we can extend our investigations, especially with regard to ourselves, but a very little way. And, after all, when we acquiesce with implicit confidence in the dictates of our nature, where is the harm or the danger of such a conduct? Is our life shortened, or health injured by it? No. Are our judgments perverted,

or our hearts corrupted? No. Is our happiness impaired, or the sphere of our gratification contracted? Quite the contrary. Have we less leisure for attending to the duties of life, and for adorning our minds with useful and elegant literature? We have evidently more time left for those purposes. Why then so much logick, so many disputes, and so many theories, about the first philosophy? Rather than in disguising falsehood, and labouring to subvert the foundations of truth, why do we not, with humility and candour, employ our faculties in the attainment of plain, practical, and useful knowledge?*

* It is far from my intention to say, that a talent for arguing on either side of a controvertible question is of no use. When exerted with good nature, and modesty, it may sometimes help to enliven conversation, and give play to the intellectual faculties. And it may also be applied with good effect to purposes still more important.

It would seem that Cicero thought, that the end of publick speaking was not to elucidate or investigate truth, but only to make one opinion appear more probable than another; and that when an orator had done his best, it could only be said, "Illum prudentibus "diserte, stultis etiam vere dicere videri." *De Oratore, lib.* 1. & 3. For such an employment, disputation was a very proper preparatory exercise, as the same author often declares. But it does not follow, that a habit of disputation is of benefit to the philosopher, or to those

The consequences of submitting every sentiment and principle to the test of reasoning, have been considered already. This practice has, in every age, tended much to confound science, to

publick speakers, whose aim, far more noble than that of the Ciceronian orator, is to inform the judgment, and improve the heart.

In a senate or council, met for the purpose of preparing or making laws, it is highly expedient, that the reasons for and against every publick measure be urged with freedom. This tends not only to preserve the laws and constitution, but also to quiet men's minds, by removing those jealousies which are generally entertained against persons in high office. Besides, political truth depends often on principles so exceedingly complicated, that a magistrate or senator will hardly trust his own judgment, till he finds it warranted by that of others, and has heard the most material reasons that can be urged in opposition. But to argue against conviction, and for the sake of argument, or in order to gratify private pique, or to support a faction, is surely unworthy of senators met in solemn assembly, and deliberating upon affairs of the utmost importance, both to the present and to future generations.

Moreover: As it is better that a criminal escape, than an innocent man suffer punishment; and as the law should not only determine the differences, but as much as possible satisfy the minds of men; it will be readily allowed, that in a court of justice every prisoner should be presumed to be innocent, till the proofs of his guilt appear, and every cause thoroughly discussed on both sides, that

prevent the detection of errour, and (may we not add?) to debase the human understanding. For have we not seen real genius, under the influence of a disputatious spirit, derived from na-

the grounds upon which the sentence proceeds may be evident to all concerned. It is therefore right, that each party should be permitted to exert itself, as far as truth and decency will permit, in its own vindication. So that a habit of divising arguments on either side of controverted questions seems to be a necessary qualification to every person who wishes to make a figure at the bar. For the more fully those questions are discussed before the judges, the greater honour redounds, not to the pleader only, but to the law also, and consequently the greater emolument to the community. Yet even these judicial disputations may be carried too far. And the more a pleader indulges himself in deviating from truth, in perplexing the cause with arguments that he knows to be frivolous, in confounding the judgment of his hearers by unreasonable appeals to their passions, or in wearing out their attention with studied prolixity, the less respectable will he be in his private character, and the less useful as a member of society. I never heard a lawyer blamed for declining a cause notoriously bad: but to engage for hire in all causes, good and bad, with equal zeal and equal alacrity, is surely not commendable.

To be able to speak readily and plausibly in vindication of any opinion, is no doubt an ornamental, and may be an useful accomplishment. But to teach it, belongs rather to the rhetorician, than to the philosopher. And it is to be feared, that, in their ardour to acquire it,

ture, fashion, or education, evaporate in subtlety, sophistry, and vain refinement? Lucretius, Cicero, and Des Cartes, might be mentioned as examples. And it will be matter of lasting regret in the republick of letters, that one, greater in some respects than the greatest of these, I mean John Milton, had the misfortune to be born in an age when the study of scholastick theology was deemed an essential part of intellectual discipline.

It is either affectation, or false modesty, that makes him say they know nothing with certainty. Man's knowledge, indeed, compared with that of superiour beings, may be very inconsiderable: and compared with that of the Supreme, is "as nothing, and vanity:" and it is true, that we are daily puzzled in attempting to account for the most familiar appearances. But it is true notwithstanding, that we do know, and cannot

young men have sometimes become more enamoured of victory than of truth, and more intent upon words than upon argument; and that they may have also been too eager to display it in private company, where, unless seasoned with wit and modesty, with sweetness of temper, and softness of voice, it soon becomes a most intolerable nuisance. To philosophy, that is, to the right observation and interpretation of nature, habits of wrangling, and theories of syllogism, seem to me to be just as necessary a prelude, as the art of rope-dancing is to the study of agriculture.

doubt of our knowing, some things with certainty. And

> " Let school taught pride dissemble all it can,
> " These little things are great to little man."*

To be vain of any attainment, is presumption and folly: but to think every thing disputable, is a proof of a weak mind and captious temper. And however scepticks may boast of their modesty, in disclaiming all pretensions to certain knowledge, I would appeal to the man of candour, whether they or we seem to possess least of that virtue; they, who suppose, that they can raise insurmountable objections in every subject; or we, who believe, that our Maker has permitted us to know with certainty some few things?

In opposition to this practice of making every thing matter of dispute, we have endeavoured to show, that the instinctive suggestions of common sense are the ultimate standard of truth to man; that whatever contradicts them is contrary to fact, and therefore false; that to suppose them cognisable by reason, is to suppose truth as variable as the intellectual, or as the argumentative, abilities of men; and that it is an abuse of reason, and tends to the subversion of science, to call in question the authenticity of

* Goldsmith's Traveller.

our natural feelings, and of the natural suggestions of the human understanding.

That science never prospered while the old logick continued in fashion, is undeniable. Lord Verulam was one of the first who brought it into disrepute; and proposed a different method of investigating truth, namely that the appearances of nature should be carefully observed; and, instead of facts being wrested to make them fall in with theory, that theory should be cautiously inferred from facts, and from them only. The event has fully proved, that our great philosopher was in the right: for science has made more progress since his time, and by his method, than for a thousand years before. The court of Rome well knew the importance of the school logick in supporting their authority; they knew it could be employed more successfully in disguising errour, than in vindicating truth: and Puffendorff scruples not to insinuate, that they patronised it for this very reason.* Let it not then be urged, as an objection to this discourse, that it recommends a method of confutation which is not strictly logical. It is enough for me, that the method here recommended is agreeable to good sense and sound philosophy, and to the general notions and practices of men.

* De Monarchia Pontificis Romani.

CHAPTER II.

The Subject continued. Estimate of Metaphysick, Causes of the Degeneracy of Moral Science.

THE reader has no doubt observed, that I have frequently used the term *metaphysick*, as if it implied something worthy of contempt or censure. That no lover of science may be offended, I shall now account for this, by explaining the nature of that metaphysick which I conceive to be repugnant to true philosophy, though it has often assumed the name; and which, therefore, in my judgment, the friends of truth ought solicitously to guard against. This explanation will lead to some remarks that may perhaps throw additional light on the present subject.

Aristotle bequeathed by legacy his writings to Theophrastus; who left them, together with his own, to Neleus of Scepsis. The posterity of Neleus being illiterate men, kept them for some time locked up; but afterwards hearing, that the king of the country was making a general search for books to furnish his library at Pergamus, they hid them in a hole under ground,

where they lay for many years, and suffered much from worms and dampness. At last, however they were sold to one Apellicon; who caused them to be copied out; and having, (according to Strabo) a greater passion for books than for knowledge, ordered the transcribers to supply the chasms from their own invention. When Sylla took Athens, he seized on Apellicon's library, and carried it to Rome. Here the books of Aristotle were revised, by Tyrannio the grammarian, and afterwards by Andronicus of Rhodes, a peripatetick philosopher, who published the first complete edition of them.* To fourteen of these books, which it seems had no general title, Andronicus prefixed the words, *Ta meta ta physica;*† that is, *The books posteriour to the physicks;* either because in the order of the former arrangement, they happened to be so placed, or because the editor meant that they should be studied, next after the physicks. This is said to be the origin of the word *metaphysick.*

The subject of these fourteen books is miscellaneous: yet the Peripateticks seem to have considered them as constituting but one branch of science; the place of which in their system

* Strabo, p. 609. Paris edit. 1620. Plut. Sylla

† Τὰ μετὰ τα Φυσικα.

may be thus conceived. All philosophy is either speculative or practical. The practical regulates the moral and intellectual operations of men, and therefore comprehends ethicks and logick. The speculative rests in the knowledge of truth; and is divided into three parts, to wit, physicks, which inquire into the nature of material substances, and the human soul; mathematicks which consider certain properties of body as abstracted from body; and this metaphysick, (which Aristotle is said to have called *theology*, and the *first philosophy*,) which, besides some remarks on truth in general, the method of discovering it, and the errours of former philosophers, explains, first, the general properties of being; and secondly, the nature of things separate from matter, namely, of God the one first cause, and of the forty-seven inferiour deities.

Following the notion, that these fourteen books comprehend only one part of philosophy, the christian Peripateticks divided metaphysicks into universal and particular. In the first they treated of being, and its properties and parts considered as it is being;* in the second, of God and angels.

The schoolmen disjoined the philosophy of the

* Metaphysique universelle—à laquelle il est traité de l'etant, et des ses proprietés, et des parties ou membres de l'etant, selon qu'il est etant, &c. *Bouju.*

human mind from physicks where Aristotle had placed it; and added it to metaphysicks, because its object is an immaterial substance. So that their metaphysicks consisted of three parts; ontology, in which they pretended to explain the general properties of being; pneumaticks, which treated of the human mind; and natural theology, which treated of the supreme Being, and of those spirits which have either no body at all, or one so very fine as to be imperceptible to human sense.

From the account we have given of the manner in which Aristotle's works were first published, the reader will admit, that some of the errours to be found in them may reasonably enough be imputed to the first transcribers and editors. It was a gross errour in distribution, to reduce God, and the inferiour deities, who were conceived to be a particular species of beings, to the same class with those qualities or attributes that are common to all being, and to treat of both in the same part of philosophy. It was no less improper than if a physiologist should compose a treatise, "Of men, horses, and identity." This inaccuracy could not have escaped Aristotle: it is to be charged on his editors, who probably mistook a series of treatises on various subjects for one treatise on one particular subject.

To many this may seem a trifling mistake; but it has produced important consequences. It led the earlier Peripateticks into the impropriety of explaining the divine existence, and the general properties of being, by the same method of reasoning; and it induced the schoolmen to confound the important sciences of pneumaticks and natural theology with the idle distinctions and logomachies of ontology. Natural theology ought to consist of legitimate inferences from the effect to the cause; pneumaticks, or the philosophy of the human mind, are nothing but a detail of facts methodized, and applied to practice, by obvious and convincing reasonings: both sciences are founded in experience; but ontology pretends to ascertain its principles by demonstrations *a priori*. In fact, though ontology were, what it professes to be, an explication of the general properties of being, it could not throw any light on natural theology and pneumaticks; for in them the ontological method of reasoning would be as improper as the mathematical. But the systems of ontology that have come into my hands are little better than vocabularies of those hard words which the schoolmen had contrived, in order to give an air of mystery and importance to their doctrine. While, therefore, the sciences of natural theology and pneumaticks were, by

this preposterous division, referred to the same part of philosophy with ontology, how was it possible they could prosper, or be explained by their own proper evidence! In fact, they did not prosper: experience, their proper evidence, was laid aside; and fictitious theory, disguised by ontological terms and distinctions, and supported by ontological reasoning, was substituted in its stead.

Locke was one of the first who rescued the philosophy of human nature out of the hands of the schoolmen, cleared it of the enormous incumbrance of strange words which they had heaped upon it, and set the example of ascertaining our internal operations, not by theory but by experience. His success was wonderful: for though he has sometimes fallen into the sholastick way of arguing, as in his first book, and sometimes suffered himself to be imposed on by words, as in his account of secondary qualities, too rashly adopted from the Cartesians; yet has he done more to establish the abstract sciences on a proper foundation, than could have been expected from one man, who derived almost all his lights from himself. His successours, Butler and Hutcheson excepted, have not been very fortunate. Berkeley's book, though written with a good design, did more harm than good,

by recommending and exemplifying a method of argumentation subversive of all knowledge, and leading directly to universal scepticism. Mr. HUME's *treatise* and *essays* are still more exceptionable. This author has revived the scholastick way of reasoning from theory, and of wresting facts to make them coincide with it. His language indeed is more modish, but equally favourable to sophistical argument, and equally proper for giving an air of plausibility and importance to what is frivolous or unintelligible. What regard we are to pay to his profession of arguing from experience has been already considered.

The word *metaphysicks*, according to vulgar use, is applied to all disquisitions concerning things immaterial. In this sense the plainest account of the faculties of the mind, and of the principles of morality and natural religion, would be termed *metaphysicks*. Such metaphysicks, however, we are so far from despising or censuring, that we account it the sublimest and most useful part of science.

Those arguments also and illustrations in the abstract philosophy, which are not obvious to ordinary understandings, are sometimes called *metaphysical*. But as the principles of this philosophy, however well expressed, appear some-

what abstruse to one who is but a novice in the study; and as very plain principles may seem intricate in an author who is inattentive to his expression, as the best authors sometimes are, it would be unfair to reject, or conceive a prejudice against, every moral doctrine that is not perfectly free from obscurity. Yet a continued obscurity, in matters whereof every man should be a competent judge, cannot fail to breed a suspicion, either that the doctrine is faulty, or that the writer is not equal to his subject.

The term *metaphysical*, in those passages of this book, where it is expressive of censure, will be found to allude to that mode of abstract investigation, so common among the Scepticks and the schoolmen, which is supported, either wholly by an ambiguous and indefinite phraseology, or by that in conjunction with a partial experience; and which seldom fails to lead to such conclusions as contradict matter of fact, or truths of indisputable authority. It is this mode of investigation that has introduced so many errours into the moral sciences; for few even of our most candid moral philosophers, are entirely free from it. The love of system, or partiality to a favourite opinion, not only puts a man off his guard; so as to make him overloook inaccurate expressions, and indefinite notions, but

may sometimes occasion even a mistake of fact. When such mistakes are frequent, and affect the most important truths, we must blame the author for want of candour, or want of capacity: when they are innocent, and recur but seldom, we ought to ascribe them to the imperfection of human nature.

Instances of this metaphysick are so common, that we might almost fill a volume with a list of them. Spinosa's pretended demonstration of the existence of the one great being, by which, however, he meant only the universe, is a metaphysical argument, founded in a series of false or unintelligible, though plausible definitions.* Berkeley's proof of the nonexistence of matter is wholly metaphysical; and arises chiefly from the mistake of supposing certain words to have but one meaning, which really have two, and sometimes three. Locke's discourse against innate ideas and principles, is likewise too metaphysical. Some of his notions on that subject are, I believe, right; but he has not explained them with his wonted precision; and most of his arguments are founded on an ambiguous acceptation of the words *idea* and *innate*.

* See the Appendix to vol. 1. of Chev. Ramsay's Principles of Religion.

The author of the *Fable of the Bees* seems to have carried this mode of reasoning as far as it will go. If there had been no ambiguous words in the English language, the understanding of mankind would never have been affronted with his system. Many of our appetites become criminal only when excessive; and we have not always names to express that degree of indulgence which is consistent with virtue. The shameless wordcatcher takes advantage of this, and confounds the innocent gratification with the excessive or criminal indulgence; calling both by the same name, and taking it for granted, that what he proves to be true of the one is also true of the other. What is it that may not be proved by this way of arguing? May not vice be proved to be virtue, and virtue to be vice? May not a regard to reputation, cleanliness, industry, generosity, conjugal love, be proved to be the same with vanity, luxury, avarice, profusion, sensuality? May it not be proved, that private virtues are private vices; and, consequently, that private vices are publick benefits? Such a conclusion is indeed so easily made out by such logick, that nothing but ignorance, impudence and a hard heart, is necessary to qualify a man for making it. If it be said, that considerable genius must be employed in

dressing up these absurd doctrines, so as to render them plausible; I would ask, who are the persons who think them plausible? Never did I hear of one man of virtue or learning, who did not both detest and despise them. They seem plausible enough to gamblers, highwaymen, and *petit maitres;* but it will not be pretended, that those gentlemen have leisure, inclination, or capacity, to reflect on what they read or hear so as to separate truth from falsehood.

Among metaphysical writers, Mr. HUME holds a distinguished place. Every part of philosophy becomes metaphysick in his hands. His whole theory of the understanding is founded on the doctrine of impressions and ideas, which, as he explains it, is so contrary to fact, that nothing but the illusion of words could make it pass upon any reader. I have already given several instances of this author's metaphysical spirit. I shall give one more, which I beg leave to consider at some length; that I may have an opportunity of confuting a very dangerous errour, and, at the same time, of displaying more minutely, than by this general description, the difference between metaphysical and philosophical investigation.

Does any one imagine, that moral and intel-

lectual virtues, that justice and genius, are virtues of the same kind; that they are contemplated with the same sentiments, and known to be virtues by the same criterion? Few, I presume, are of this opinion; Mr. HUME has adopted it, and taken pains to prove it. I shall demonstrate, that this very important errour has arisen, either from inaccurate observation, or from his being imposed on by words not well understood, or rather from both causes.

It is true, that justice, great genius, and bodily strength, are all useful to the possessor and to society; and all agreeable to, or (which in this author's style amounts to the same thing) approved by, every one who considers or contemplates them. They therefore, at least the two first, completely answer our author's definition of virtue.* And it would be easy to write a great book, to show the reasons why moral, intellectual, and corporeal abilities, yield plea-

* It is the nature, and indeed the definition, of virtue, "that it is a quality of the mind agreeable to, or ap- "proved by, every one who considers or contemplates "it." *Hume's Essays, vol. 2. p. 333. edit. 1767. Note.*

Bodily qualities are excluded by this definition, but seem to be admitted by our author in some of his reasonings on the subject, as indeed upon his principles they very well may.

sure to the beholder and possessor, and to trace out a number of analogies, real or verbal, subsisting between them. But this is nothing to the purpose: they may resemble in ten thousand respects, and yet differ as widely, as a beast or statue differs from a man. Let us trace the author's argument to its source.

Virtue is known by a certain agreeable feeling or sentiment, arising from the consciousness of certain affections or qualities in ourselves, or from the view of them in others. Granted. Justice, humanity, generosity, excite approbation; a handsome face excites approbation; great genius excites approbation: the effect or sentiment produced is the same in each instance: the object, or cause, must therefore, in each instance, be of the same kind. This is genuine metaphysick: but before a man can be misled by it, he must either find, on consulting his experience, that the feeling excited by the contemplation of these objects is the same in each instance; in which case I would say, that his feelings are defective, or himself an inaccurate observer of nature: or he must suppose, that the word *approbation*, because written and pronounced the same way, does really mean the same thing in each of the three propositions above mentioned; in which case, I would say, that his judgment and ideas are con-

founded by the mere sound and shape of a word. I am conscious, that my approbation of a fine face is different in kind from my approbation of great genius; and that both are extremely different from my approbation of justice, humanity, and generosity: if I call these three different kinds of approbation by the same general name, I use that name in three different significations. Therefore moral, intellectual, and corporeal virtues, are not of the same, but of different kinds.

I confess, says our author, that these three virtues are contemplated with three different kinds of approbation. But the same thing is true of different moral virtues: piety excites one kind of approbation, justice another, and compassion a third; the virtues of Cato excite our esteem, those of Cæsar our love: if therefore piety, justice, and compassion, be virtues of the same kind, notwithstanding that they excite different kinds of approbation, why would justice, genius, and beauty, be accounted virtues of different kinds?* This is another metaphysical argument; an attempt to determine by words what facts only can determine. I still insist on fact and experience. My sentiments, in regard to these virtues, are so diversified, and in each variety so peculiar,

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 258.

that I know, and am assured, that piety, justice, and humanity, are distinct individual virtues of the same kind; and that piety, genius, and beauty, are virtues of different kinds. Applied to each of the former qualities, the word *virtue* means the same thing; but beauty is virtue in one sense, genius in another, and piety in a third.

Well, if the sentiments excited in you by the contemplation of these virtues, are so much diversified, and in each variety so peculiar, you must be able to explain in what respect your approbation of intellectual virtue differs from your approbation of moral; which I presume you will find no easy task. It is not so difficult, sir, as you seem to apprehend. When a man has acted generously or justly, I praise him, and think him worthy of praise and reward, for having done his duty; when ungenerously or unjustly, I blame him, and think him worthy of blame and punishment: but a man deserves neither punishment nor blame for want of beauty or of understanding; nor reward nor praise for being handsome or ingenious. But why are we thought worthy of blame and punishment for being unjust, and not for being homely, or void of understanding? The general conscience of mankind would reply, Because we have it in our power to be just, and ought to be so; but an idiot cannot

help his want of understanding, nor an ugly man his want of beauty. This our author will not allow to be a satisfactory answer; because, says he, I have shown, that freewill has no place with regard to the actions, no more than the qualities of men. * What an immense metaphysical labyrinth should we have to run through if we were to disentangle ourselves out of this argument in the common course of logick! To shorten the controversy, I must beg leave to affirm, in my turn, that our moral actions are in our own power, though beauty and genius are not; and to appeal, for proof of this affirmation, to the second part of this essay, or, rather, to the common sense of mankind.

Again, "Moral distinctions," says Mr. HUME, "arise from the natural distinctions of pain and "pleasure; and when we receive those feelings "from the general consideration of any quality "or character, we denominate it virtuous or vi-"tious. Now I believe no one will assert, that a "quality can never produce pleasure or pain to "the person who considers it, unless it be per-"fectly voluntary in the person who possesses "it." † More metaphysick! and a sophism too:

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 260.
† Idem.

a *petitio principii!* Here our author endeavours to confound intellectual with moral virtue, by an argument which supposeth his own theory of virtue to be true; of which theory this confusion of the virtues is a necessary consequence. The reader must see, that this argument, if it prove any thing at all, might be made to prove, that the smell or beauty of a rose, the taste of an apple, the hardness of steel, and the glittering of a diamond, as well as bodily strength and great genius, are all virtues of the same kind with justice, generosity, and gratitude. Still we wander from the point. How often must it be repeated, that this matter is to be determined, not by metaphysical arguments founded on ambiguous words, but by facts and experience!

"Have I not appealed to facts? he will say. "Are not all the qualities that constitute the "great man, constancy, fortitude, magnanimity, "as involuntary and necessary, as the qualities "of the judgment and imagination?" * The term *great man* is so very equivocal, that I will have nothing to do with it. The vilest scoundrel on earth, immediately commences great man, when he has with impunity perpetrated any extraordinary act of wickedness; murthered fifty thousand

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 259.

men; robbed all the houses of half a dozen provinces; or dexterously plundered his own country, to defray the expense of a ruinous war, contrived on purpose to satiate his avarice, or divert the publick attention from his blunders and villanies. I speak of the qualities that constitute the *good man*, that is, of moral qualities; and these, I affirm, to be within every man's reach, though genius and beauty are not.

" But are not men afraid of passing for goodna-
" tured, least that should be taken for want of un-
" derstanding? and do they not often boast of more
" debauches than they have been really engaged
" in, to give themselves airs of fire and spirit?"* Yes: fools do the first, to recommend themselves to fools; and profligates the last, to recommend themselves to profligates: but he is little acquainted with the human heart, who does not perceive, that such sentiments are affected, and contrary to the way of thinking that is most natural to mankind.

" But are you not as jealous of your character,
" with regard to sense and knowledge, as to ho-
" nour and courage?" † This question ought to be addressed to those in whom courage is a vir-

* Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.
† Ibid.

tue, and the want of it a vice: and I am certain, that there is not in his majesty's service one officer or private man, who would not wish to be thought rather a valiant soldier, though of no deep reach, than a very clever fellow, with the addition of an infamous coward. The term *honour* is of dubious import. According to the notions of these times, a man may blaspheme God, sell his country, murder his friend, pick the pocket of his fellow-sharper, and employ his whole life in seducing others to vice and perdition, and yet be accounted a man of honour; provided he be accustomed to speak certain words, wear certain clothes, and haunt certain company. If this be the honour alluded to by the author, an honest man may, for a slender consideration, renounce all pretensions to it. But if he allude (as I rather suppose) to those qualities of the heart and understanding which intitle one to general esteem and confidence, Mr. HUME knows, that this kind of honour is dearer to a man than life.

"Well, then, temperance is a virtue in every "station; yet would you not choose to be convict-"ed of drunkenness rather than of ignorance?"* I have heard of a witty parson, who, having been dismissed for irregularities, used afterwards

* See Treatise of Human Nature, vol. 3. p. 257.

in conversation, to say, that he thanked God he was not cashiered for ignorance and insufficiency, but only for vice and immorality. According to our author's doctrine, this speech was neither absurd nor profane: but I am sure the generality of mankind would be of a different opinion. To be ignorant of what we ought to know, is to be deficient in moral virtue; to profess to know what we are ignorant of, is falsehood, a breach of moral virtue: whether these vices be more or less atrocious than intemperance must be determined by the circumstances of particular cases. To be ignorant of what we could not know, of what we do not profess to know, and of what it is not our duty to know, is no vice at all; and a man must have made some progress in debauchery, before he can say from serious conviction I would rather be chargeable with intemperance, than with ignorance of this kind.

It appears, then, that our author's reasoning on the present subject, is not philosophical, but what I call *metaphysical;* * being founded, not on

* I do not contend, that this use of the word *metaphysical* is strictly proper: I mean nothing more, than to give the reader a notion of this particular mode of false reasoning; and, by satisfying him that it is *not philosophical,* to guard him against its influence.

fact, but on theory, and supported by ambiguous words and inaccurate experience.

The judgment of the wiser ancients in matters of morality, is doubtless of very great weight, but, in opposition to the dictates of our own moral nature, can never preponderate; because these are our ultimate standard of moral truth. Mr. Hume endeavours to confirm his theory of virtue by authorities from the ancients, particularly the Stoicks and Peripateticks. Though he had accomplished this, we might have appealed from their opinion, as well as from his, to our own feelings. But he fails in this, as in the other parts of his proof.

It is true, the Peripateticks and Stoicks made prudence the first (not the most important) of the cardinal virtues; because they conceived it necessary to enable a man to act his part aright in life, and because they thought it their duty to take every opportunity of improving their nature: but they never said, that an incurable defect of understanding is a vice, or that it is as much our duty to be learned and ingenious, as to be honest and grateful. "All the praise of virtue consists in "action," says Cicero, † in name of the Stoicks, when treating of this virtue of prudence. And,

† De Officiis, lib. 1. cap. 6.

when explaining the comparative merit of the several classes of moral duty, he declares, that "All knowledge which is not followed by action, "is unprofitable and imperfect, like a beginning "without an end, or a foundation without a su- "perstructure; and that the acquisition of the "most sublime and most important science ought "to be, and will by every good man be relinquish- "ed, when it interferes with the duties we owe "our country, our parents, and society."* Wisdom, indeed, he allows to be the first and most excellent of the virtues: but the Stoicks made a distinction between prudence and wisdom. By prudence they meant that virtue which regulates our desires and aversions, and fixes them on proper objects. Wisdom was another name for mental perfection: it comprehended all the virtues, the religious as well as the social and prudential; and was equally incompatible with vice and with errour.† The wise man, the standard of stoical excellence, was, by their own acknowledgment, an ideal character; the purest virtue attainable in this life being necessarily tainted with imperfection. Hence some have endeavoured to turn their notions of *wisdom* into ridicule; but I

* De Officiis, lib. 1. cap. 43. 44.
† Id. ib.

think, without reason. For is there any thing absurd or ridiculous in an artist working after a model of such perfection as he can never hope to equal? In the judgment of Aristotle and Bacon, the true poet forms his imitations of nature after a model of ideal perfection, which perhaps hath no existence but in his own mind.* And are not Christians commanded to imitate the Deity himself, that great original and standard of perfection, between whom and the most excellent of his creatures an infinite distance must remain for ever? †

"The ancient moralists," says Mr. HUME, "made no material distinction among the different species of mental endowments and defects, but treated all alike under the appellation of virtues and vices, and made them indiscriminately the objects of their moral reasonings."‡ That they considered both intellectual and moral endowments as necessary to the formation of a perfect character, and sometimes treated of both in one and the same book or system, and often called both by the same general name *virtue*, I do not deny: but that they

* Aristot. Poetica. Bacon, De augmentis scientiarum, lib. 2. cap. 13.

† Matth. v. 48.

‡ Hume's Essays, vol. 2. p. 387. 388.

made no *material distinction* among them, I can by no means admit. I might here fill many a page with quotations: but a few will suffice. "Man's "virtue and vice," says Marcus Aurelius, "consists not in those affections in which we are "passive, but in action. To a stone thrown upward it is no evil to fall, nor good to have "mounted."* And in another place, "The vainglorious man placeth his good in the action of "another; the sensual in his own passive feelings; the wise man in his own action."† "The "contemplative life," says Plutarch, "when it "fails to produce the active, is unprofitable."‡ "To acquire knowledge," says Lucian, "is of "no use, if we do not also frame our lives according to something better."|| It is remarkable, that the Greek tragedians (I know not by

* Οὔδὲ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ κακια αὐτῆ ἐν πεῖσει ἄλλα ἐνεργείᾳ· τῷ ἀναρριφθέντι λίθῳ οὐδεν κακὸν τὸ κατενεχθῆναι, οὐδε ἄγαθον τὸ ἀνενεχθῆναι. *Lib.* 9. *c.* 47.

† Ὁ μὲν φιλόδοξος ἀλλοτριαν ἐνέργειαν ἰδιον ἀγαθον ὑπολαμβανει· ὁ δὲ φιλήδονος, ἰδιαν πεισιν· ὁ δὲ νοῦν, ἐχων, ἰδίαν πρᾶξιν. *Lib.* 6. *c.* 51.

‡ Ὁ δὲ θεωρητικὸς βίος τῆ πρακτικῆ διαμαρτάναν, ἀνωφελὴς. *Plutarch de Educatione.*

|| Οὐδὲν ὄφελος ἦν ἐπίστασθαι τὰ μαθήματα, εἰ μὴ τις ἄρα καὶ τὸν βίον ρυθμίζει πρὸς τὸ βελτίον. *Lucian. Convivo.*

what authority, for Homer's idea is very different) represent Ulysses as a character more distinguished for political prudence or cunning, than for strict moral virtue; and often place him in such attitudes as make him appear odious on this very account.* And Cicero, in his treatise of moral duties, often declares, that cunning, when it violates the rules of justice, is

* See particularly Sophocles. Philoct. vers. 100. and vers. 1260. I beg leave to quote a few remarkable lines. Neoptolemus having, by the advice of Ulysses, fraudulently got possession of the arrows of Philoctetes, repents of what he had done, and is going to restore them. To deter him from his purpose, Ulysses threatens him with the resentment of the whole Grecian army.

Neop. Σοφὸς πεφυκὼς οὐδὲν ἐξαυδᾷς σοφὸν.
Ulys. Σὺ δ' οὔτε φωνεῖς, οὔτε δρασέεις σοφὸν.
Neop. Ἀλλ' εἰ δίκαια, τῶν σοφῶν κρείσσω τάδε.
Ulys. Καὶ πῶς δίκαιον, ἅ γ' ἔλαβες βουλαῖς ἐμαῖς
Παλὶν μεθεῖναι ταυτα; *Neop.* Τὴν ἁμαρτίαν
Αἰσχρὰν ἁμαρτὼν, ἀναλαβεῖν πειράσομαι
Ulys. Στράτον δ' Ἀχαιῶν οὐ φοβῇ πράσσων τάδε;
Neop. Σὺν τῷ δικαίῳ τὸν σὸν οὐ ταρβῶ φοβον.
vers. 1279.

Neop. Wise as thou art, Ulysses,
Thou talk'st most idly. *Ulys.* Wisdom is not thine,
Either in word or deed. *Neop.* Know, *to be just*
Is better far than to be wise. Ulys. But where.
Where is the justice, thus unauthoriz'd,

blamable and hateful.† Does Virgil consign cripples and idiots, as well as tyrants, to Tartarus? Does he say, that a great genius, and handsome face, as well as a pure heart, were the

To give a treasure back thou owest to me,
And to my counsels? *Neop.* I have done a wrong,
And I will try to make atonement for it.
Ulys. Dost thou not fear the power of Greece? *Neop.* I fear
Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.

FRANKLIN.

Throughout the whole play, the fire and generosity of the young hero (so well becoming the son of Achilles) is finely opposed to the caution and craft of the politician, and forms one of the most striking contrasts that can well be imagined.

† —— Quippe cum ea (justitia) sine prudentia satis habeat auctoritatis, prudentia sine justitia nihil valet ad faciendam fidem. Quo enim quis versutior et calidior est, hoc invisior et suspectior, detracta opinione probitatis. *De Officiis, lib. 2. cap. 9.*

Fundamentum perpetuæ commendationis et famæ est justitia, sine qua nihil potest esse laudabile.

Idem. cap. 20.

The same doctrine is repeatedly inculcated in the third book, and in other parts of his works, and indeed in all the good books I am acquainted with. And in all the rational conversations I ever witnessed, the same doctrine was implied; nor could any man be thought seriously to believe the contrary, without forfeiting the esteem and confidence of mankind.

passports to Elysium? No. Virgil was too good a man to injure the cause of virtue, and too wise to shock common sense, by so preposterous a distribution of reward and punishment. The impious, the unnatural, the fraudulent, the avaricious; adulterers, incestuous persons, traitors, corrupt judges, venal statesmen, tyrants, and the minions of tyrants, are those whom he dooms to eternal misery: and he peoples Elysium with the shades of the pure and the pious; of heroes, who have died in defence of their country; of ingenious men, who have employed their talents in recommending piety and virtue, and of all who by acts of beneficence have merited the love and gratitude of their fellow creatures.*

* Virgil. Æneid. vi. 547. 665. As the moral sentiments of nations may often be learned from their fables and traditions, as well as from their history and philosophy, it will not perhaps be deemed foreign from our design, to give the following brief abstract of this poet's sublime theory of future rewards and punishments; the outlines of which he is known to have taken from the Pythagorians and Platonists, who probably were indebted for them to some ancient tradition.

The shades below are divided by Virgil into three districts or provinces. On this side Styx, the souls of those whose bodies have not been honoured with the rites of sepulture, wander about in a melancholy condition for a hundred years, before they are permitted

The Peripateticks held prudence to be an active principle diffused through the whole of

to pass the river. When this period expires, or when their bodies are buried, they are ferried over, and appear before Minos and the other judges, who allot them such a mansion as their lives on earth are found to have deserved. They who have been of little or no use to mankind; or who have not been guilty of any very atrocious crimes; or whose crimes, though atrocious, were the effects rather of an unhappy destiny, than of wilful depravation, are disposed of in different parts of the *regions of mourning*, (lugentes campi,) where they undergo a variety of purifying pains. From thence, when thoroughly refined from all the remains of vice, they pass into Elysium; where they live a thousand years in a state of happiness; and then, after taking a draught of the waters of oblivion, are sent back to earth to animate new bodies. Those who have been guilty of great crimes, as impiety, want of natural affection, adultery, incest, breach of trust, subverting the liberties of their country, &c. are delivered by the judge Rhadamanthus to Tisiphone and the other furies, who shut them up in an immense dungeon of darkness and fire, called *Tartarus*, where their torments are unspeakable and eternal. The souls of good men are reunited, either with the Deity himself, or with that universal spirit which he created in the beginning, and which animates the world; and their shades, ghosts, or *idola*, enjoy for ever the repose and pleasures of Elysium. These shades might be seen though not touched; they resembled the bodies with which they had formerly been invested;

moral virtue.* " None but a good man," says Aristotle, " can be prudent;" and a little after, " It is not possible for a man to be properly good " without prudence, nor prudent without moral

* —Ἀ'νάγκη τὴν φρονήσιν ἕξιν εἶναι—πρακτικὴν.
Ethic. ad Nicom. vi. 5.

and retained a consciousness of their identity, and a remembrance of their past life, with almost the same affections and character that had distinguished them on earth.

On this system, Virgil has founded a series of the sublimest descriptions that are to be met with in poetry. Milton alone has equalled them in the first and second books of Paradise Lost. Homer's *Necyomanteia*, in the eleventh of the Odyssey, has the merit of being original: but Virgil's imitation is confessedly far superiour. The dream of Henry, in the seventh canto of the Henriade, notwithstanding the advantages the author might have drawn from the christian theology, is but a trifle, compared with the magnificent and stupendous scenery exhibited in the sixth book of the Æneid.

This theory of future rewards and punishments, however imperfect, is consonant enough with the hopes and fears of men, and their natural notions of virtue and vice, to render the poet's narrative alarming and interesting in a very high degree. But were an author to adopt Mr. Hume's theory of virtue and the soul, and endeavour to set it off in a poetical description, all the powers of human genius could not save it from being ridiculous. A metaphysician may " blunder," for

"virtue." * Will it yet be said that the ancient moralists made no material distinction between moral and intellectual virtues? Is it not evident, that though they considered both as necessary to the formation of a perfect character, and sometimes discoursed of both in the same treatise or system, yet they deemed the latter valuable only as means to qualify us for the former, and insignificant, or even odious, when they failed to answer this end?

"We may," says Mr. HUME, "by perusing "the titles of the chapters in Aristotle's Ethicks, "be convinced, that he ranks courage, tempe- "rance, magnificence, magnanimity, modesty, "prudence, and a *manly freedom*, among the

a long time, "round about a meaning," without giving any violent shock to an inattentive reader: but a poet, who clothes his thoughts with imagery, and illustrates them by examples, must come to the point at once; and, if he means to please, and not disgust his readers, to move their admiration, and not their contempt, must be careful not to contradict their natural notions, especially in matters of such deep and universal concern as morality and religion.

* Α'δύνατον φρόνιμον εἶναι μὴ ὄντα ἀγαθόν.—Οὐχ' ὅίον ἀγαθὸν εἶναι κυριως ἄνευ φρονήσεως· οὐδε φρονιμον ἄνευ τῆς ηθικῆς ἀρετῆς. *Id.* vi. 13.

See the elegant paraphrase of Andronicus the Rhodian, upon these passages.

" virtues, as well as justice and friendship." * True; but if our learned metaphysician had extended his researches a little beyond the *titles* of those chapters, he would have found, that, in Aristotle's judgment, " Moral virtue is a volun-
" tary disposition or habit: and that the moral
" approbation and disapprobation are excited by
" those actions and affections only which are in
" our own power, that is, of which the first mo-
" tion arises in ourselves, and proceeds from no
" extrinsick cause."†

This is true philosophy, and very properly determines the degree of merit of our intellectual and constitutional virtues. A man makes proficiency in knowledge: if in this he has acted from a desire to improve his nature, and qualify himself for moral virtue, that desire, and the action consequent upon it, are virtuous, laudable and of good desert. Is a man possessed of great genius? this invests him with dignity and distinction, and

* Hume's Essays, vol. 2. p. 388. The term *manly freedom* does not express the meaning of the Greek ἐλευθεριότης. By this word the philosopher denotes *that virtue which consists in the moderate use of wealth*—περὶ χρήματα μεσότης. See Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 4. cap. 1. 2.

† Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 2. & 3. Andronicus Rhodius. p. 89. 90. &c. Edit. Cantab. 1679.

qualifies him for noble undertakings: but this of itself is no moral virtue; because it is not a disposition resulting from a spontaneous effort. Is his constitution naturally disposed to virtue? he still has it in his power to be vitious, and therefore his virtue is meritorious; though not so highly as that of another man, who, in spite of outrageous appetites and tempting circumstances, hath attained an equal degree of moral improvement. A man constitutionally brave, generous, or grateful, commands our admiration more than another, who struggles to overcome the natural baseness of his temper. The former is a sublimer object, and may be of greater service to society; and as his virtue is secured by constitution as well as by inclination, we repose in it without fear of being disappointed. Yet perhaps the latter, if his merit were equally conspicuous, would be found equally worthy of our moral approbation. Indeed, if his virtue be so irresolute, as to leave him wavering between good and evil, he is not intitled to praise: such irresolution is criminal, because he may and ought to correct it; we cannot, and we ought not to trust him, till we see a strong prepossession established in favour of virtue. However, let us love virtue wherever we find it: whether the immediate gift of heaven, or the effect of human industry coope-

rating with divine influence, it always deserves our esteem and veneration.

The reader may now form an estimate of that author's attention, who says, that "the ancient "moralists made no material distinction among "the different species of mental endowments and "defects." If any one is disposed to think, that I have made out my point, rather by inference than by direct proof, I submit to his consideration the following passages, which are too plain to need a commentary.

Having proposed a general distribution of our mental powers, (which seems to amount to this, that some of them fit us for knowledge, and others for action) Aristotle proceeds in this manner. "According to this distribution, virtue is "also divided into intellectual and moral. Of the "former kind are wisdom, intelligence, and pru- "dence; of the latter, temperance, and frugal li- "berality. When we speak of morals, we do not "say, that a man is wise or intelligent, but that "he is gentle or temperate. Yet we praise a wise "man in respect of his dispositions [or habits]; "for laudable dispositions are what we call vir- "tues." *

* Διορίζεται δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀρέτη κατὰ τὴν διαφόραν ταύτην. λέγομεν γὰρ αὐτῶν τὰς μὲν διανοητικὰς, τὰς δὲ ἠθικας. σοφίαν μὲν καὶ

" The virtues of the soul," says Cicero, " and " of its principal part the understanding, are vari- " ous, but may be reduced to two kinds. The first " are those which nature has implanted, and which " are called *not voluntary*. The second kind are " more properly called *virtues*, because they de- " pend on the will; and these, as objects of ap- " probation, are transcendently superiour. Of the " former kind are docility, memory, and all the " virtues distinguished by the general name of " genius, or capacity: persons possessed of them " are called ingenious. The latter class compre- " hends *the great and genuine virtues*, which " we denominate *voluntary;* as prudence, tempe- " rance, fortitude, justice, and others of the same " kind." *

σύνεσιν. καὶ φρονησιν, διανοητίκας· ἐλευθεριότητα δὲ καὶ σωφροσυνν, ἤθικας. λέγοντὲς γὰρ περὶ τῦ ηθους, ὐ λέγομεν ὅτι σόφος, ἢ σύνετος, ἀλλ' ὅτι πραος ἢ σώφρων. ἐπαινῦμεν δὲ καὶ τὸν σοφὸν τὴν ἕξιν, τῶν ἐξετων δὲ τὰς ἐπαινέτας ἀρέτας λέγομεν.

Ethic. ad Nicom. lib. 1. *sub. fin.*

* Animi autem, et ejus partis quæ princeps est, quæque mens nominatur, plures sunt virtutes, sed quo prima genera: unum earum quæ ingenerantur suapte natura, appellanturque non voluntariæ: alterum autem earum, que in voluntate positæ, magis proprie eo nomine appellari solent; quarum est excellens in animorum laude præstantia. Prioris generis est docilitas, memoria; qualia fere omnia appellantur uno ingenii nomine; easque

The word *virtue* has indeed great latitude of signification. It denotes any quality of a thing tending to the happiness of a percipient being; it denotes that quality, or perfection of qualities, by which a thing is fitted to answer its end; sometimes it denotes power or agency in general; and sometimes any habit which improves the faculties of the human mind. In the first three senses we ascribe virtue to the soul, and to the body, to brutes, and inanimate things; in the last, to our intellectual as well as moral nature. And no doubt instances may be found of ambiguity and want of precision, even in the best moralists, from an improper use of this word. Yet I believe this attempt of Mr. HUME's is the first that has been made to prove that among these very different sorts of virtue there is little or no difference.

Is it not strange, that a man of science should ever have taken it in his head, that the characteristick of a genus is a sufficient description of a species? He might as well have supposed, that

virtutes qui habent ingeniosi vocantur. Alterum autem genus est *magnarum verarumque virtutum*, quas appellamus voluntarias, ut prudentiam, temperantiam, fortitudinem, justitiam, et reliquas ejusdem generis. Virtutes voluntariæ proprie virtutes appellantur multumque excellunt, &c.

Cicero De Finibus, lib. 5. cap. 13. ex editione Davisii.

because perception and self-emotion belong to animal life in general, it is therefore a sufficient definition of man, to call him a self-moving and percipient creature; from which profound principle it clearly follows, that man is a beast, and that a beast is a man.

By such reasoning it would be easy to prove any doctrine. The method is this: and I hope those who may hereafter choose to astonish the world with a system of metaphysical paradoxes, will do me the honour to acknowledge, that I was the first who unfolded the whole art and mystery of one branch of that manufacture within the compass of one short RECIPE: Take a word (an abstract term is the most convenient) which admits of more than one signification; and, by the help of a predicate and copula, form a proposition, suitable to your system, or to your humour, or to any other thing you please, except truth. When laying down your premises, you are to use the name of the quality or subject, in one sense; and, when inferring your conclusion, in another. You are then to urge a few equivocal facts, very slightly examined, (the more slightly the better) as a further proof of the said conclusion; and to shut up all with citing some ancient authorities. A few occasional strictures on religion as an unphilosophical thing, and a sneer at the

whole duty of man,* or any other good book, will give your dissertation what many are pleased to call a *liberal turn;* and will go near to convince the world, that you are a candid philosopher, a manly freethinker, and a very fine writer.

It is to no purpose that our author calls this a verbal dispute, and sometimes condescends to soften matters by an *almost*, or some such evasive word. This doctrine obviously tends to confound all our ideas of virtue and duty, and to make us consider ourselves as mere machines, acted upon by external impulse, and not more accountable for moral blemishes, than for ignorance, and want of understanding. If the reader think as seriously of the controversy as I do, he will pardon the length of this digression.

I hope it now appears, that there is a kind of metaphysick, which whatever respectable names it may have assumed, deserves contempt or censure from every lover of truth. If it be detrimental to science, it is equally so to the affairs of life. Whenever one enters on business, the metaphysical spirit must be laid aside, otherwise it will render him ridiculous, perhaps detestable. Surely it will not be said, that any portion of this spirit is necessary to form a man for stations of

* See Hume's Essays, vol. 2 p. 338, edit. 1767.

high importance. For these a turn to metaphysick would be an effectual disqualification. The metaphysician is cold, wavering, distrustful, and perpetually ruminates on words, distinctions, arguments, and systems. He attends to the events of life with a view chiefly to the system that happens for the time to predominate in his fancy, and to which he is anxious to reconcile every appearance. His observation is therefore partial and inaccurate, because he contemplates Nature through the medium of his favourite theory, which is always false; so that experience, which enlarges, ascertains, and methodises, the knowledge of other men, serves only to heighten the natural darkness and confusion of his. His literary studies are conducted with the same spirit, and produce the same effects. Whereas, to the administration of great affairs, truth and steadiness of principle, constancy of mind, intuitive sagacity, extreme quickness in apprehending the present and anticipating the future, are indispensably necessary. Whatever tends to weaken and unsettle the mind, to cramp the imagination, to fix the attention on minute and trifling objects, and withdraw it from those enlarged prospects of nature and mankind in which true genius loves to expatiate; whatever has that tendency, and surely this metaphysick has it, is the bane of

genius, and of every thing that is great in human nature.

In the lower walks of life, our theorist will be oftener the object of ridicule than of detestation. Yet even here, the man is to be pitied, who, in matters of moment, happens to be connected with a stanch metaphysician. Doubts, disputes, and conjectures, will be the plague of his life. If his associate form a system of action or inaction, of doubt, or confidence, he will stick by it, however absurd, as long as he has one verbal argument unanswered to urge in defence of it. In accounting for the conduct of others, he will reject obvious causes, and set himself to explore such as are more remote and refined. Making no proper allowance for the endless variety of human character, he will suppose all men influenced, like himself, by system and verbal argument: certain causes, in his judgment, must of necessity produce certain effects; for he has twenty reasons ready to offer, by which it is demonstrable, that they cannot fail: and it is well, if experience at last convince him, that there was a small verbal ambiguity in his principles, and that his views of mankind were not quite so extensive as they ought to have been. In a word, unless he be very goodnatured, and of a passive disposition, his refinements will do more harm than even the

stiff stupidity of an idiot. If inclined to fraud, or any sort of vice, he will never be at a loss for an evasion; which, if it should not satisfy his associate, will, however, perplex and plague him. I need not enlarge; the reader may conceive the rest. To aid his fancy, he will find some traits of this character, in one of its most amusing and least disagreeable forms, delineated with a masterly pencil in the person of Walter Shandy, esq.

It is astonishing to consider, how little mankind value the good within their reach, and how ardently they pursue what nature has placed beyond it; how blindly they overrate what they have no experience of, and how fondly they admire what they do not understand. This verbal metaphysick has been dignified with the name of *science;* and verbal metaphysicians have been reputed philosophers, and men of genius. Doubtless a man of genius may, by the fashion of the times, be seduced into these studies: but that particular cast of mind which fits a man for them, and recommends them to his choice, is not genius, but a minute and feeble understanding; capable indeed of being made, by long practice, expert in the management of words; but which never did, and never will, qualify any man for the discovery or illustration of sentiment. For what is genius? What, but sound

judgment, sensibility of heart, and a talent for accurate and extensive observation? And will sound judgment prepare a man for being imposed on by words? will sensibility of heart render him insensible to his own feelings, and inattentive to those of other men? will a talent for accurate and extensive observation, make him ignorant of the real phenomena of nature, and, consequently, incapable of detecting what is false or equivocal in the representation of facts? And yet, when facts are fairly and fully represented; when human sentiments are strongly felt, and perspicuously described: and when the meaning of words is ascertained, and the same word has always the same idea annexed to it, there is an end of metaphysick.

A body is neither vigorous nor beautiful, in which the size of some members is above, and that of others below, their due proportion: every part must have its proper size and strength, otherwise the result of the whole will be deformity and weakness. Neither is real genius consistent with a disproportionate strength of the reasoning powers above those of taste and imagination. Those minds in whom all the faculties are united in their due proportion, are far superiour to the puerilities of metaphysical scepticism. They trust to their own feel-

ings, which are strong and decisive, and leave no room for hesitation or doubts about their authenticity. They see through moral subjects at one glance; and what they say carries both the heart and the understanding along with it. When one has long drudged in the dull and unprofitable pages of metaphysick, how pleasing the transition to a moral writer of true genius! Would you know what that genius is, and where it may be found? Go to Shakspeare, to Bacon, to Johnson, to Montesquieu, to Rousseau;* and

* As several persons, highly respectable both for their talents and principles, have desired to know my reasons for joining Rousseau's name to those of Bacon, Shakspeare, Johnson, and Montesquieu, I beg leave to take this opportunity of explaining my sentiments in regard to that celebrated author.

It is because I consider Rousseau as *a moral writer of true genius*, that I mention his name in this place. Sensibility of heart, a talent for extensive and accurate observation, liveliness and ardour of fancy, and a style copious, nervous and elegant, beyond that of any other French writer, are his distinguishing characteristicks. In argument he is not always equally successful, for he often mistakes declamation for proof, and hypothesis for fact; but his eloquence, when addressed to the heart, overpowers with force irresistible. A greater number of important facts relating to the human mind are recorded in his works, than in all the books of all the sceptical philosophers, ancient and modern. And he appears in

when you have studied them, return, if you can, to HUME, and HOBBES, and MALEBRANCHE, and LEIBNITZ, and SPINOSA. If, while you learned wisdom from the former, your heart exulted

general to be a friend to virtue, to mankind, to natural religion, and sometimes to christianity.

Yet none of his best works are free from absurdity. His reasonings, on the effects of the sciences, and on the origin and progress of human society, are diffuse, inaccurate, and often weak; much perverted by theories of his own, as well as by too implicit an admittance of the vague assertions of travellers, and of the systems and doctrines of some favourite French philosophers; and he seems, in these, and frequently too in his other writings, to consider animal pleasure and bodily accomplishments as the happiness and perfection of man. His plan of education, though admirable in many parts, is in some injudicious and dangerous, and impracticable as a whole. The character of Julia's lover is drawn with a masterly hand indeed, and well conducted throughout; but the lady has two characters, and those incompatible; the wife of Wolmar is quite a different person from the mistress of St. Preux. Wolmar himself is an impossible character; destitute of principle, yet of rigid virtue; destitute of feeling, yet capable of tenderness and attachment; delicate in his notions of honour, yet not ashamed to marry a woman whom he knew to be to all intents and purposes devoted to another.

Some of this author's remarks on the spirit of christianity, and on the character of its divine foun-

within you, and rejoiced to contemplate the sublime and successful efforts of human intellect; perhaps it may now be of use, as a lesson of humility, to have recourse to the latter, and, for a

der, are not only excellent, but transcendently so; and I believe no Christian ever read them without feeling his heart warmed, and his faith confirmed. But what he says, of the absurdities which he fancies to be contained in the sacred history, of the impropriety of the evidence of miracles, of the analogy between those of Jesus Christ and the tricks of jugglers, of the insignificancy and impertinence of prayer, of the sufficiency of human reason for discovering a complete and comfortable scheme of natural religion, of the discouraging nature of the terms of salvation offered in the gospel, of the measure of evidence that ought to accompany divine revelation (which, as he states it, would be incompatible with man's free agency and moral probation); what he says of these, and of several other theological points of great importance, betrays a degree of ignorance and prejudice, of which, as a philosopher, as a scholar, and as a man, he should have been utterly ashamed. He appears to be distressed with his doubts; and yet, without having ever examined whether they be well or ill founded, scruples not to exert all his eloquence on purpose to infuse them into others: a conduct which I must ever condemn, as illiberal, unjust, and cruel Had Rousseau studied the scripture, and the writings of rational divines, with as much care as he seems to have employed in reading the books, and listening to the conversation, of French infidels, and in attend-

while, to behold the picture of a soul wandering from thought to thought, without knowing where to fix; and from a total want of feeling, or a total ignorance of what it feels, mistaking

ing to the unchristian practices and doctrines warranted by some ecclesiastical establishments; I may venture to assure him, that his mind would have been much more at ease, his works much more valuable, and his memory much dearer to all good men.

Rousseau is, in my opinion, a great philosophical genius, but wild, irregular, and often self-contradictory; disposed, from the fashion of the times, and from his desire of being reputed a bold speaker and freethinker, to adopt the doctrines of infidelity; but of a heart too tender, and an imagination too lively, to permit him to become a thoroughpaced infidel. Had he lived in an age less addicted to hypothesis, he might have distinguished himself as a moral philosopher of the first rank. What pity, that a proper sense of his superiority to his cotemporaries upon the continent, could not preserve him from the contagion of their example! For, though now it is the fashion for every French declaimer to talk of Bacon and Newton, I question, whether, in any age since the days of Socrates, the building of fanciful theories was so epidemical as in the present. If the men of learning formerly employed their ingenuity in defending the theories of that philosopher by whose name they were ambitious to be distinguished; they are now no less industrious in divising and vindicating, each man a theory of his own.

To conclude: The writings of this author, with all

names for things, verbal distinctions and analogies for real difference and similitude, and the obscure insinuations of a bewildered understanding, puzzled with words, and perverted with theory, for the sentiments of nature, and the dictates of reason. A metaphysician, exploring the recesses of the human heart, has just such a chance for finding the truth, as a man with microscopick eyes would have for finding the road. The latter might amuse himself with contemplating the various mineral strata that are diffused along the expansion of a needle's point; but of the face of nature he could make nothing: he would start back with horrour from the caverns yawning between the mountainous grains of sand

their imperfections, may be read by the philosopher with advantage, as they often direct to the right observation and interpretation of nature; and by the Christian without detriment, as the cavils they contain against religion are too slight and too paradoxical to weaken the faith of any one who is tolerably instructed in the principles and evidence of christianity. To the man of taste they can never fail to recommend themselves, by the charms of the composition.

The improprieties in Rousseau's late conduct appear to me to have arisen rather from bodily infirmity than from moral depravation, and consequently to render him an object of forbearance and pity rather than of persecution or ridicule.

that lie before him; but the real gulf or mountain he could not see at all.

Is the futility of metaphysical systems exaggerated beyond the truth by this allusion? Tell me, then, in which of those systems I shall find such a description of the soul of man as would enable me to know what it is. A great and excellent author observes, that if all human things were to perish except the works of Shakspeare, it might still be known from them what sort of creature man was:* a sentiment nobly imagined, and as just as it is sublime! Can the same thing be said with truth of any one, or of all the metaphysical treatises that have been written on the nature of man? If an inhabitant of another planet were to read *The Treatise of Human Nature*, what notions of human nature could he gather from it? That man must believe one thing by instinct, and must also believe the contrary by reason: That the universe is nothing but a *heap* of perceptions without a substance: That though a man could bring himself to believe, yea, and have reason to believe, that every thing in the universe proceeds from some cause; yet it would be unreasonable for him to believe, that the universe itself proceeds from a cause: That the

* Lord Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead.

soul of man is not the same this moment it was the last; that we know not what it is; that it is not one, but many things; and that it is nothing at all; and yet, that in this soul is the agency of all the causes that operate throughout the sensible creation; and yet, that in this soul there is neither power nor agency, nor any idea of either: That the perfection of human knowledge is to doubt: That man ought to believe nothing, and yet that man's belief ought to be influenced and determined by certain principles: That we ought to doubt of every thing, yea of our doubts themselves; and therefore the utmost that philosophy can do, is to give a doubtful solution of doubtful doubts:* That nature continually imposes on us, and continually counteracts herself, by giving us sagacity to detect the imposture: That we are necessarily and unavoidably determined to think in certain cases after a certain manner; but that we ought not to submit to this unavoidable necessity; and that they are fools who do so: That man, in all his perceptions, actions, and volitions,

* Strange as this expression may seem, it is not without a precedent. The fourth section of Mr. HUME's *Essays on the Human Understanding* is called, *Sceptical doubts concerning the operations of the understanding:* and the fifth section bears this title, *Sceptical solution of these doubts.*

is a mere passive machine, and has no separate existence of his own, being entirely made up of other things, of the existence of which, however, he is by no means certain; and yet, that the nature of all things depends so much upon man, that two and two could not be equal to four, nor fire produce heat, nor the sun light, without an act of the human understanding: That none of our actions are in our power; that we ought to exercise power over our actions; and that there is no such thing as power: that body and motion may be regarded as the cause of thought; and that body does not exist: That the universe exists in the mind; and that the mind does not exist: That the human understanding, acting alone, does entirely subvert itself, and prove by argument, that by argument nothing can be proved. These are a few of the many sublime mysteries brought to light by this great philosopher, or plainly deducible from his principles. But these, however they may illuminate our terrestrial *literati*, would convey no information to the planetary stranger, except perhaps, that the sage metaphysician knew nothing of his subject.

What a strange detail! does not the reader exclaim? Can it be, that any man should ever bring himself to think, or imagine that he could bring others to think so absurdly! What a taste, what a

heart * must they possess, whose delight it is, to represent nature as a chaos, and man as a monster; to search for deformity and confusion, where others rejoice in the perception of order and

* "A free and impartial inquiry after truth, wher-
"ever it is to be found, is indeed a noble and most com-
"mendable disposition; a disposition, which every man
"ought himself to labour after, and to the utmost of his
"power encourage in all others. It is the great foundation
"of all useful knowledge, of all true virtue, and of all sin-
"cere religion. But when a man, in his searches into the
"nature of things, finds his inquiries leading him to-
"wards such notions as, if they should prove true,
"would manifestly subvert the very essences of good
"and evil; the least that a soberminded man can in
"such a case possibly be supposed to owe to God, to
"virtue, to the dignity of a rational nature, is, that he
"ought to be in the highest degree fearful and suspi-
"cious of himself, lest he be led away by any prejudice,
"lest he be deceived by an erroneous argument, lest
"he suffer himself to be imposed on by any wrong incli-
"nation. Too great an assurance in arguments of this
"nature, even though at present they seemed to him
"to be demonstrations, rejoicing in the strength of
"them, and taking pleasure in the carrying of such a
"cause, is what a good mind can never be capable of.
"To such a person, the finding his own arguments un-
"answerable would be the greatest grief; triumphing
"in so melancholy a field would be the highest dissatis-
"faction; and nothing could afford so pleasing, so agree-
"able, a disappointment, as to find his own reasonings

beauty; and to seek to imbitter the happiest moments of human life, namely, those we employ in contemplating the works of creation, and adoring their Author, by this suggestion, equally

" shown to be inconclusive." *Dr. S. Clarke's Remarks on a book entitled, A Philosophical Inquiry concerning Human Liberty, p.* 45.

" This is certain (says Shaftesbury) that it can be no " great strengthening to the moral affection, no great " support to the pure love of goodness and virtue, to " suppose that there is neither goodness nor beauty in " the WHOLE itself; nor any example or precedent of any " good affection in any superiour being. Such a belief " must tend rather to the weaning the affections from any " thing amiable or selfworthy, and to the suppressing " the very habit and familiar custom of admiring natural " beauties, or whatever in the order of things is accord- " ing to just design, harmony, and proportion. For how " little disposed must a person be, to love or admire " any thing as orderly in the universe, who thinks the " universe itself a pattern of disorder? How unapt to " reverence or respect any particular subordinate beau- " ty of a *part*, when even the *whole* itself is thought " to want perfection, and to be only a vast and infinite " deformity? Nothing indeed can be more melancholy, " than the thought of living in a distracted universe, from " whence many ills may be suspected, and where there " is nothing good or lovely which presents itself, noth- " ing which can satisfy in contemplation, or raise any " passion besides that of contempt, hatred, or dislike. " Such an opinion as this may by degrees imbitter the

false and malevolent, that the moral as well as material world, is nothing but darkness, dissonance, and perplexity!

" Where all life dies, death lives, and nature breeds
" Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
" Abominable, unutterable, and worse
" Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd!"

Were this doctrine true, we should be little obliged to him who gives it to the publick; for we could hardly imagine a greater misfortune than such a cast of understanding as would make us believe it. But founded, as it is, in words misunderstood, and facts misrepresented; supported, as it is, by sophistry so egregious, and often so puerile, that we can hardly conceive how even the author himself should be imposed upon by it; surely they who attempt to obtrude it on the weak and unwary, must have something in their disposition, which, to a man of a good heart, or good taste, can never be the object of envy.

We are told, that the end of scepticism, as it was taught by Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, and

" temper, and not only make the love of virtue to be " less felt, but help to impair and ruin the very princi- " ple of virtue, to wit, natural and kind affection."

Inquiry concerning Virtue, b. 1. *p.* 3. § 3.

other ancients, was to obtain *indisturbance*.* I know not whether this be the end our modern Scepticks have in view; if it is, the means they employ for attaining it are very preposterous. If the prospect of nature exhibited in their systems produce tranquillity or indisturbance, how dreadful must that tranquillity be! It is like that of a man, turned adrift amidst a dark and tempestuous ocean, in a crazy skiff, with neither rudder nor compass, who, exhausted by the agitations of despair, loses at last all sense of his misery, and becomes totally stupid. In fact, the only thing that can enable Scepticks to endure existence, is insensibility. And how far that is consistent with deli-

* Pyrrho, as he affected not to believe his senses, affected also to be free from all passions and emotions: for when Anaxarchus, his master and fellow traveller, happened to fall into a ditch, that worthy Sceptick passed on without once looking behind him; for which indifference his besotted master is said to have held him in great admiration. An instance like this, when it occurs in history, is not less astonishing, than a monstrous birth, or any other uncommon appearance; except we suppose these precious patterns of wisdom to have played tricks with one another, to make the people stare. At any rate, it is surely unworthy of a man of honour and learning, to list himself under their banners, by reviving any of their silly paradoxes.

cacy of mind, let those among them explain who are ambitious of passing for men of taste.

It is remarked by a very ingenious and amiable writer, that "many philosophers have been "infidels, few men of taste and sentiment."* This, if I mistake not, holds equally true of our Scepticks in philosophy, and infidels in religion: and it holds true of both for the same reason. The views and expectations of the infidel and Sceptick are so full of horrour, that to a man of taste, that is, of sensibility and imagination, they are insupportable. On the other hand, what true religion and true philosophy dictate of God, and providence, and man, is so charming, so consonant with all the finer and nobler feelings in human nature, that every man of taste who hears of it must wish it to be true: and I never yet heard of one person of candour, who wished to find the evidence of the gospel satisfactory, and did not find it so. Dull imaginations and hard hearts can bear the thought of endless confusion, of virtue depressed and vice triumphant, of an universe peopled with fiends and furies, of creation annihilated, and chaos restored, to remain a scene of darkness and solitude for ever and for ever: but it is not so with the benevolent and

* Dr. Gregory's Comparative View, p. 201. fourth edition.

tenderhearted. Their notions are regulated by another standard; their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, are quite of a different kind.

The moral powers and the powers of taste are more congenial than is commonly imagined; and he who is destitute of the latter will ever be found as incapable to describe or judge of the former, as a man wanting the sense of smell is to decide concerning relishes. Nothing is more true, than that "a little learning is a dangerous "thing." If we are but a little acquainted with one part of a complicated system, how is it possible for us to judge aright, either of the nature of the whole, or of the fitness of that part! And a little knowledge of one small part of the mental system, is all that any man can be allowed to have, who is defective in imagination, sensibility, and the other powers of taste. Yet, as ignorance is apt to produce temerity, I should not be surprised to find such men most forward to attempt reducing the philosophy of human nature to system: and, if they made the attempt, I should not wonder that they fell into the most important mistakes. Like a shortsighted landscape painter, they might possibly delineate some of the largest and roughest figures with tolerable exactness; but of the minuter objects, some would wholly escape their notice, and others appear

bloated and distorted, on which nature had bestowed the utmost delicacy of colour, and harmony of proportion.

The modern sceptical philosophy is as corrupt a body of science as ever appeared in the world. And it deserves our notice, that the most considerable of its adherents and promoters were more eminent for subtlety of reason, than for sensibility of taste. We know that this was the case with MALEBRANCHE, of whom Mr. D'Alembert says, that he could not read the most sublime verses without weariness and disgust.* This was also the case with another author, to whom our Scepticks are more obliged than they seem willing to acknowledge. I mean Mr. HOBBES; whose translation of Homer bears just such a resemblance to the Iliad and Odyssey, as a putrefying carcase bears to a beautiful and vigorous human body.

The philosophy of the mind, if such as it ought to be, would certainly interest us more than any other science. Are the sceptical treatises on this subject interesting? Do they bring conviction to the judgment, or delight to the fancy? Do they either reach the heart, or seem to proceed from it? Do they make us better acquainted with ourselves, or better prepared for the business of life? Do they

* Essai sur le Goût.

not rather enfeeble and harass the soul, divert its attention from every thing that can enlarge and improve it, give it a disrelish for itself, and for every thing else, and disqualify it alike for action, and for useful knowledge?

Other causes might be assigned for the present degeneracy of the moral sciences. I shall mention one, which I the rather choose to take notice of, and insist upon, because it has been generally overlooked. DES CARTES and MALEBRANCHE introduced the fashion, which continues to this day, of neglecting the ancients in all their philosophical inquiries. We seem to think, because we are confessedly superiour in some sciences, that we must be so in all. But that this is a rash judgment, may easily be made appear, even on the supposition, that human genius is nearly the same in all ages.

When accidental discovery, long experience, or profound investigation, are the means of advancing a science, it is reasonable to expect, that the improvements of that science will increase with length of time. Accordingly we find, that, in natural philosophy, natural history, and some parts of mathematical learning, the moderns are far superiour to the ancients. But the science of human nature, being attainable rather by intuition than by deep reasoning or nice experiment, must de-

pend for its cultivation upon other causes. Different ages and nations have different customs. Sometimes it is the fashion to be reserved and affected, at other times to be simple and sincere: sometimes, therefore, it will be easy, and at other times difficult, to gain a competent knowledge of human nature by observation. In the old romances, we seek for human nature in vain; the manners are all affected; prudery is the highest, and almost the only ornament, of the women; and a fantastical honour of the men: but the writers adapted themselves to the prevailing taste, and painted the manners as they saw them. In our own country, we have seen various modes of affectation, successively prevail within a few years. To say nothing of present times; every body knows, how much pedantry, libertinism, and false wit, contributed to disguise human nature in the last century. And I apprehend, that in all monarchies one mode or other of artificial manners must always prevail; to the formation of which the character of princes, the taste of the times, and a variety of other causes will cooperate.

Montesquieu's opinion, that the courts of monarchs must always of necessity be corrupt, I cannot subscribe to. I think, that virtue may be, and sometimes is, the principle of action, even in the highest offices of monarchy: my meaning is, that under this form of government, human

no end that the study of such jargon can answer, except to harden and stupify the heart, bewilder the understanding, sour the temper, and habituate the mind to irresolution, captiousness, and falsehood. For studies of this sort I have neither time nor inclination, I have neither head nor heart. To enter into them at all, is foolish; to enter into them with warmth, ridiculous; but to treat those with any bitterness, whose judgments concerning them may differ from ours, is in a very high degree odious and criminal. Thus far, then, my adversaries and I are agreed. Had the sceptical philosophers confined themselves to those inoffensive wranglings that show only the subtlety and captiousness of the disputant, but affect not the principles of human conduct, they never would have found an opponent in me. My passion for writing is not strong; and my love of controversy so weak, that, if it could always be avoided with a safe conscience, I would never engage in it at all. But when doctrines are published subversive of morality and religion, doctrines of which I perceive and have it in my power to expose the absurdity, my duty to the publick forbids me to be silent; especially when I see, that, by the influence of fashion, folly, or more criminal causes, those doctrines spread wider and wider every day, diffusing ignorance, misery, and licentiousness,

wherever they prevail. Let us oppose the torrent, though we should not be able to check it. The zeal and example of the weak have often roused to action, and to victory, the slumbering virtue of the strong.

I likewise agree with my adversaries in this, that scepticism, where it tends to make men well-bred, and goodnatured, and to rid them of pedantry and petulance, without doing individuals or society any harm, is an excellent thing. And some sorts of scepticism there are, that really have this tendency. In philosophy, in history, in politicks, yea, and even in theology itself, there are many points of doubtful disputation, in regard to which a man's judgment may lean to either of the sides, or hang wavering between them without the least inconvenience to himself or others. Whether pure space exists, or how we come to form an idea of it; whether all the objects of human reason may be fairly reduced to Aristotle's ten categories; whether Hannibal, when he passed the Alps, had any vinegar in his camp; whether Richard III. was as remarkable for cruelty and a hump back, as is commonly believed; whether Mary queen of Scotland married Bothwell from inclination, or from the necessity of her affairs; whether the earth is better peopled now than it was in ancient times; whether publick

prayers should be recited from memory, or read: in regard to these, and such like questions, a little scepticism may be very safe and very proper, and I will never think the worse of a man for differing from me in opinion. And if ever it should be my chance to engage in controversy on such questions, I here *pledge myself to the publick*, (absit invidia verbo!) that I will conduct the whole affair with the most exemplary coolness of blood, and lenity of language. I have observed, that strong conviction is more apt to breed strife, in matters of little moment, than in subjects of high importance. Not to mention (what I would willingly forget) the scandalous contests that have prevailed in the christian world about trifling ceremonies and points of doctrine, I need only put the reader in mind of those learned criticks and annotators, Salmasius, Valla, and Scaliger, who in their squabbles about words, gave scope to such rancorous animosity, and virulent abuse, as is altogether without example. In every case where dogmatical belief tends to harden the heart, or to breed prejudices incompatible with candour, humanity, and the love of truth, all good men will be careful to cultivate moderation and diffidence.

But there are other points, in regard to which a strong conviction produces the best effects, and

doubt and hesitation the worst: and these are the points that our Scepticks labour to subvert, and I to establish. That the human soul is a real and permanent substance, that God exists, that virtue and vice are distinctly and essentially different, that there is such a thing as truth, and that man in many cases is capable of discovering it, are some of the principles which this book is intended to vindicate from the objections of scepticism. Attempts have been made to persuade us, that there is no evidence of truth in any science; that the human understanding ought not to believe any thing, but rather to remain in perpetual suspense between opposite opinions; that it is unreasonable to believe the Deity to be perfectly wise and good, or even to exist; that the soul of man has nothing permanent in its nature, nor indeed any kind of existence distinct from its present perceptions, which are continually changing, and will soon be at an end; and that moral distinctions are ambiguous. This scepticism, the reader will observe, is totally subversive of science, morality and religion, both natural and revealed. And this is the scepticism which I am blamed for having opposed with warmth and earnestness.

I desire to know, what good effects this scepticism is likely to produce? "It humbles," we are told, "our pride of understanding." Indeed!

of fortune gave Fielding an opportunity of associating with all classes of men, except perhaps the highest, whom he rarely attempts to describe: Swift's way of life is well known: and I have been told, that Congreve used to mingle in disguise with the common people, and pass whole days and weeks among them.

That the ancient painters and statuaries were in many respects superiour to the modern, is universally allowed. The monuments of their genius that still remain, would convince us of it, even though we were to suppose the accounts given by Pliny, Lucian, and other cotemporary authors, to be a little exaggerated. The uncommon spirit and elegance of their attitudes and proportions are obvious to every eye: and a great master seems to think, that modern artists, though they ought to imitate, can never hope to equal the magnificence of their ideas, or the beauty of their figures.* To account for this, we need not suppose, that human genius decays as the world grows older. It may be ascribed partly to the superiour elegance of the human form in those days, and partly to the artists having then better opportunities of observing the human body, free from

* Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica, lin. 190.

the incumbrances of dress, in all the varieties of action and motion. The ancient discipline of the Greeks and Romans, particularly the former, was admirably calculated for improving the human body in health, strength, swiftness, flexibility, and grace. In these respects, therefore, they could hardly fail to excel the moderns, whose education and manners tend rather to enervate the body, and cramp all its faculties. And as the ancients performed many of them naked, and thought it honourable to excel in them; as their clothing was less cumbersome than our gothick apparel, and showed the body to more advantage; it must be allowed that their painters and statuaries had better opportunities of observation than ours enjoy, who see nothing but aukward and languid figures, disguised by an unwieldly and ungraceful attire.*

Will it not, then, be acknowledged, that the ancients may have excelled the moderns in the science of human nature, provided it can be shown, that they had better opportunities of observing it? That this was the case, appears from what has been already said. And that they really excelled us in this science, will not be doubted by those who acknowledge their superi-

* See Algarotti on painting, chap. 2.

ority in rhetorick and criticism; two arts which are founded in the philosophy of the human mind. But a more direct proof of the point in question may be had in the writings of Homer, Plutarch, and the socratick philosophers; which, for their admirable pictures of human nature in its genuine simplicity, are not equalled by any compositions of a later date. Of Aristotle I say nothing. We are assured by those who have read his works, that no author ever understood human nature better than he. Fielding himself† pays him this compliment; and his testimony will be allowed to have considerable weight.

Let me therefore recommend it to those philosophers who may hereafter make human nature the subject of their speculation, to study the ancients more than our modern Scepticks seem to have done. If we set out, like the author of *The Treatise of Human Nature*, with a fixed purpose to advance as many paradoxes as possible; or with this foolish conceit, that men in all former ages were utter strangers to themselves, and to one another; and that we are the first of our species on whom nature has bestowed any glimmerings of discernment; we may depend on it, that in proportion as our vanity is great, our

† Fielding's works, vol. ii. p. 384. London 1766, 12mo.

success will be small. It will be, like that of a musician, who should take it in his head, that Corelli had no taste in counterpoint, nor Handel or Jackson any genius for melody; of an epick poet, who should fancy, that Homer, Virgil, and Milton, were bad writers; or of a painter, who should suppose all his brethren of former times to have been unacquainted with the colours, lineaments, and proportions of visible objects.

If Columbus, before he set out on his famous expedition to the western world, had amused himself with writing a history of the countries he was going to visit; would the lovers of truth, and interpreters of nature, have received any improvement or satisfaction from such a specimen of his ingenuity? And is not the system which, without regard to experience, a philosopher frames in his closet, concerning the nature of man, equally frivolous? If Columbus, in such a history, had described the Americans with two heads, cloven feet, wings, and a scarlet complexion; and after visiting them, and finding his description false in every particular, had yet published that description to the world, affirming it to be true, and at the same time acknowledging, that it did not correspond with his experience; I know not whether mankind would have been most disposed to blame his disin-

genuity, to laugh at his absurdity, or to pity his want of understanding. And yet we have known a metaphysician contrive a system of human nature, and, though sensible that it did not correspond with the real appearances of human nature, deliver it to the world as sound philosophy; we have heard this system applauded as a masterpiece of genius; and we have seen the experience of individuals, the consent of nations, the accumulated wisdom of ages, the principles of science, the truths of religion, and dictates of common sense, sacrificed to this contemptible and self-contradictory chimera.

I would further recommend it to our moral philosophers, to study themselves with candour and attention, and cultivate an acquaintance with mankind, especially with those whose manners retain most of the truth and simplicity of nature. Acquaintance with the great makes a man of fashion, but will not make a philosopher. They who are ambitious to merit this appellation, think nothing below them which the Author of nature has been pleased to create, to preserve, and to adorn. Away with this passion for system building! it is pedantry: away with this lust of paradox! it is presumption. Be equally ashamed of dogmatical prejudice, and sceptical incredulity; for both are as remote from the spirit of true

philosophy, as bullying and cowardice from true valour.

It will be said, perhaps, that a general knowledge of man is sufficient for the philosopher; and that this particular knowledge which we recommend, is necessary only for the novelist and poet. But let it be remembered, that many important errours in moral philosophy have arisen from the want of this particular knowledge; and that it is by too little, not by too much experience, by scanty, not by copious, induction, that philosophy is corrupted. Men have rarely framed a system, without first consulting experience in regard to some few obvious facts. We are apt to be prejudiced in favour of the notions that prevail within our own narrow circle; but we must quit that circle, if we would divest ourselves of prejudice, as we must go from home, if we would get rid of our provincial accent. "Horace asserts wisdom and good sense to be "the source and principle of good writing; for "the attainment of which he prescribes a care-"ful study of the socratick, that is moral wisdom, "and a thorough acquaintance with human na-"ture, that great exemplar of manners, as he "finely calls it; or, in other words, a wide exten-"sive view of real practical life. The joint di-"rection of these two," I quote the words of an

admirable critick and most ingenious philosopher, " as means of acquiring moral knowledge, " is perfectly necessary. For the former, when " alone, is apt to grow abstracted and unaffecting; " the latter uninstructive and superficial. The " philosopher talks without experience, and the " man of the world without principles. United " they supply each other's defects; while the " man of the world borrows so much of the " philosopher, as to be able to adjust the several " sentiments with precision and exactness; and " the philosopher so much of the man of the " world, as to copy the manners of life (which " we can only do by experience) with truth and " spirit. Both together furnish a thorough and " complete comprehension of human life."*

That I may not be thought a blind admirer of antiquity, I would here crave the reader's indulgence for one short digression more, in order to put him in mind of an important errour in morals, inferred from partial and inaccurate experience, by no less a person than Aristotle himself. He argues, " That men of little ge- " nius, and great bodily strength, are by na- " ture destined to serve, and those of better " capacity to command; that the natives of

* Hurd's Commentary on Horace's Epistle to the Pisos, p. 25. edit. 4.

" Greece, and of some other countries, being " superiour in genius, have a natural right to " empire; and that the rest of mankind, being " naturally stupid, are destined to labour and " slavery."† This reasoning is now, alas! of little advantage to Aristotle's countrymen, who have for many ages been doomed to that slavery which in his judgment, nature had destined them to impose on others; and many nations whom he would have consigned to everlasting stupidity, have shown themselves equal in genius to the most exalted of human kind. It would have been more worthy of Aristotle, to have inferred man's natural and universal right to liberty, from that natural and universal passion with which men desire it, and from the salutary consequences to learning, to virtue, and to every human improvement, of which it never fails to be productive. He wanted, perhaps to devise some excuse for servitude; a practice which, to their eternal reproach, both Greeks and Romans tolerated even in the days of their glory.

Mr. Hume argues nearly in the same manner in regard to the superiority of white men over black. " I am apt to suspect," says he, " the " negroes, and in general all the other species of

† De Republ. lib. 1. cap. 5. 6.

" men, (for there are four or five different kinds)
" to be naturally inferiour to the whites. There
" *never was* a civilized nation of any other com-
" plexion than white, *nor even any individual*
" eminent either in action or speculation. *No*
" ingenious manufactures among them, *no* arts,
" *no* sciences. There are negro slaves dispersed
" all over Europe, of which *none* ever discovered
" any symptoms of ingenuity."* These asser-
tions are strong; but I know not whether they have any thing else to recommend them. For, first, though true, they would not prove the point in question, except it were also proved, that the Africans and Americans, even though arts and sciences were introduced among them, would still remain unsusceptible of cultivation. The inhabitants of Great Britain and France were as savage two thousand years ago, as those of Africa and America are at this day. To civilize a nation, is a work which requires long time to accomplish. And one may as well say of an infant, that he never can become a man, as of a nation now barbarous, that it never can be civilized. Secondly, of the facts here asserted, no man could have sufficient evidence, except from a

* Hume's Essay on National Characters.

personal acquaintance with all the negroes that now are, or ever were, on the face of the earth. These people write no histories; and all the reports of all the travellers that ever visited them, will not amount to any thing like a proof of what is here affirmed. But, thirdly, we know that these assertions are not true. The empires of Peru and Mexico could not have been governed, nor the metropolis of the latter built after so singular a manner, in the middle of a lake, without men eminent both for action and speculation. Every body has heard of the magnificence, good government, and ingenuity, of the ancient Peruvians. The Africans and Americans are known to have many ingenious manufactures and arts among them, which even Europeans would find it no easy matter to imitate. Sciences indeed they have none, because they have no letters; but in oratory, some of them, particularly the Indians *of the Five Nations*, are said to be greatly our superiours. It will be readily allowed, that the condition of a slave is not favourable to genius of any kind; and yet the negro slaves dispersed over Europe, have often discovered symptoms of ingenuity, notwithstanding their unhappy circumstances. They become excellent handicraftsmen, and practical musicians, and indeed learn every thing their masters are at pains to teach them, perfidy and debauchery

not excepted. That a negro slave, who can neither read nor write, nor speak any European language, who is not permitted to do any thing but what his master commands, who has not a single friend on earth, but is universally considered and treated as if he were of a species inferiour to the human; that such a creature should so distinguish himself among Europeans, as to be talked of through the world as a man of genius, is surely no reasonable expectation. To suppose him of an inferiour species, because he does not thus distinguish himself, is just as rational, as to suppose any private European of an inferiour species, because he has not raised himself to the condition of royalty.

Had the Europeans been destitute of the arts of writing, and working in iron, they might have remained to this day as barbarous as the natives of Africa and America. Nor is the invention of these arts to be ascribed to our superiour capacity. The genius of the inventor is not always to be estimated according to the importance of the invention. Gunpowder, and the mariner's compass, have produced wonderful revolutions in human affairs, and yet were accidental discoveries. Such, probably, were the first essays in writing, and working in iron. Suppose them the effects of contrivance, they were at least con-

trived by a few individuals; and if they required a superiority of understanding, or of species, in the inventors, those inventors, and their descendents are the only persons who can lay claim to the honour of that superiority.

That every practice or sentiment is barbarous which is not according to the usages of modern Europe, seems to be a fundamental maxim with some of our philosophers. Their remarks often put us in mind of the fable of the man and the lion. If negroes or Indians were disposed to recriminate; if a Lucian or a Voltaire, from the coast of Guinea, or from *the Five Nations*, were to pay us a visit; what a picture of European manners might he present to his countrymen at his return! Nor would caricatura, or exaggeration, be necessary to render it hideous. A plain historical account of some of our most fashionable duellists, gamblers, and adulterers, (to name no more) would exhibit specimens of brutish barbarity and sottish infatuation, such as might vie with any that ever appeared in Kamschatka, California, or the land of Hottentots.

The natural inferiority of negroes is a favourite topick with some modern writers. They mean perhaps to invalidate the authority of that BOOK, which declares, that "Eve was the mother "all living," and that "God hath made of one

" blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the " face of the earth." And perhaps some of them may have it in view to vindicate a certain barbarous piece of policy, which, though it does no honour to the christian world, and is not, I believe, attended with pecuniary advantage to the commercial, has notwithstanding many patrons even in this age of light and liberty. But Britons are famous for generosity; a virtue in which it is easy for them to excel both the Romans and the Greeks. Let it never be said that slavery is countenanced by the bravest and most generous people on earth; by a people who are animated with that heroick passion, the love of liberty, beyond all nations ancient or modern; and the fame of whose toilsome, but unwearied perseverance, in vindicating, at the expense of life and fortune, the sacred rights of mankind, will strike terrour into the hearts of sycophants and tyrants, and excite the admiration and gratitude of all good men to the latest posterity.

CHAPTER III.

Consequences of Metaphysical Scepticism.

AFTER all, it will perhaps be objected to this discourse, that I have laid too much stress upon the consequences of metaphysical absurdity, and represented them as much more dangerous than they are found to be in fact. I shall be told, that many of the controversies in metaphysick are merely verbal; and the errours proceeding from them of so abstract a nature, that philosophers run little risk, and the vulgar no risk at all, of being influenced by them in practice. It will be said, that I never heard of any man who fell a sacrifice to BERKELEY's system, by breaking his neck over a material precipice, which he had taken for an ideal one; nor of any fatalist, whose morals were, upon the whole, more exceptionable than those of the assertors of free agency: in a word, that whatever effect such tenets may have upon the understanding, they seldom or never produce any sensible effects upon the heart. In considering this objection, I must confine myself to a few topicks; for the subject to

which it leads is of vast extent. The influence of the metaphysical spirit upon art, science, manners, would furnish matter for a large treatise. It will suffice at present to show, that metaphysical errours are not harmless, but may produce and actually have produced, some very important and interesting consequences.

I begin with an observation often made, and indeed obvious enough, namely, That happiness is the end of our being; and that knowledge, and even truth itself, are valuable only as they tend to promote it. Every useless study is a pernicious thing; because it wastes our time, and misemploys our faculties. To prove that metaphysical absurdities do no good, would therefore sufficiently justify the present undertaking. But it requires no deep sagacity to be able to prove a great deal more.

We acknowledge, however, that all metaphysical errours are not equally dangerous. There is an obscurity in the abstract sciences, as they are commonly taught, which is often no bad preservative against their influence. This obscurity is sometimes unavoidable, on account of the insufficiency of language; sometimes it is owing to the spiritless or slovenly style of the writer; and sometimes it is affected; as when a philosopher, from prudential considerations,

thinks fit to disguise any occasional attack on the religion or laws of his country, by some artful equivocation, in the form of allegory, dialogue, or fable. The style of *The Treatise of Human Nature* is so obscure and uninteresting, that if the author had not in his *essays* republished the capital doctrines of that work in a more elegant style, a confutation of them would not have been very necessary: their uncouth and gloomy aspect would have deterred most people from courting their acquaintance. And, after all, though this author is one of the deadliest, he is not perhaps one of the most dangerous, enemies of religion. Bolingbroke, his inferiour in subtlety, but far superiour in wit and eloquence, is more dangerous, because more entertaining. So that, though the reader may be disposed to applaud the patriotism of the grand jury of Westminster, who presented the posthumous works of that noble lord as a publick nuisance, he must be sensible, that there was no necessity for affixing any such stigma to the philosophical writings of the Scottish author. And yet it cannot be denied, that even these, notwithstanding their obscurity, have done mischief enough to make every sober-minded person earnestly wish that they had never existed.

Further, some metaphysical errours are so

grossly absurd, that there is hardly a possibility of their perverting our conduct. Such, considered in itself, is the doctrine of the nonexistence of matter; which no man in his senses was ever capable of believing for a single moment. Pyrrho was a vain hypocrite: he took it in his head to say, that he believed nothing, because he wanted to be taken notice of: he affected, too, to act up to this pretended disbelief; and would not of his own accord, step aside to avoid a dog, a chariot, or a precipice: but he always took care to have some friends or servants at hand, whose business it was to keep the philosopher out of harm's way. That the universe is nothing but a *heap* of impressions and ideas, is another of those profound mysteries, from which we need not apprehend much danger; because it is so absurd, that no words but such as imply a contradiction, will fully express it. I know not whether the absurdity of a system was ever before urged as an apology for its author. But it is better to be absurd than mischievous: and happy it were for the world, and much to the credit of some persons now in it, if metaphysicians were chargeable with nothing worse than absurdity.

Again, certain errours in our theories of human nature, considered in themselves, are in some measure harmless, when the principles that op-

pose their influence are strong and active. A gentle disposition, confirmed habits of virtue, obedience to law, a regard to order, or even the fear of punishment, often prove antidotes to metaphysical poison. When fatality has these principles to combat, it may puzzle the judgment, but will not corrupt the heart. Natural instinct never fails to oppose it; all men believe themselves free agents, as long at least as they keep clear of metaphysick; nay, so powerful is the sentiment of moral liberty, that I cannot think it was ever intirely subdued in any rational being. But if it were subdued, (and surely no fatalist will acknowledge it invincible); if the opposite principles should at the same time cease to act; and if debauchery, bad example, and licentious writings, should extinguish or weaken the sense of duty; what might not be apprehended from men who are above law, or can screen themselves from punishment? What virtue is to be expected from a being who believes itself a mere machine? If I were persuaded, that the evil I commit is imposed upon me by fatal necessity, I should think repentance as absurd as Xerxes scourging the waves of the Hellespont: and be as little disposed to form resolutions of amendment, as to contrive schemes for preventing the frequent eclipses of the satellites of Jupiter. Every author

who publishes an essay in behalf of fatality, is willing to run the risk of bringing all men over to his opinion. What if this should be the consequence? If it be possible to make one reasonable creature a fatalist, may it not be possible to make many such? And would this be a matter of little or no moment? It is, I think, demonstrable, that it would not. But I have already explained myself on this head.

Other metaphysical errours there are, which, though they do not strike more directly at the foundations of virtue, are more apt to influence mankind, because they are not so vigorously counteracted by any particular propensity. What shall we say to the theory of HOBBES, who makes the distinction between vice and virtue artificial, and dependent on the arbitrary laws of human governours? According to this account, no action that is commanded by a king or chief magistrate can be vitious, and none virtuous except warranted by that authority.* Were this opinion universal, what could deter men from secret wickedness, or such as is not cognisable by law? What could restrain governours from the utmost insolence of ty-

* See this doctrine of Mr. Hobbes more particularly explained, and very well confuted, by Dr. Clarke, in his *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, vol. 2. prop. I.

ranny?* What but a miracle could save the human race from perdition?

In the preface to one of Mr. HUME's late publications, we are presented with an elaborate pa-

* It is vain to quote history to men who will not believe their own eyes; and such I take all those to be, who look round them in the world, and deny that the licentious theories of philosophers have any influence on human practice. Yet perhaps it may not be improper to lay before some readers the following passage from Plutarch's Life of Alexander, as it is elegantly translated by Dr. Langhorne.

"—— Alexander snatched a spear from one of the guards, and meeting Clitus, ran him through the body. He fell immediately to the ground, and with a dismal groan expired. Alexander's rage subsided in a moment: he came to himself; and seeing his friends standing in silent astonishment by him, he hastily drew the spear out of the dead body, and was applying it to his own throat, when his guards seized his hands, and carried him off by force into his chamber. He passed that night and the next day in anguish inexpressible; and when he had wasted himself with tears and lamentations, he lay in speechless grief, uttering only now and then a groan. His friends, alarmed at this melancholy silence, forced themselves into the room, and attempted to console him. But he would listen to none of them, except Aristander, who put him in mind of his dream, and the ill omen of the sheep, *and assured him that the whole was by the decree of Fate.* As he seemed *a little comforted*,

negyric on the author. " He hath exerted," says the writer of the preface, " those great talents he " received from nature, and the acquisitions he " made by study, in the search of truth, and in " promoting the good of mankind." A noble encomium indeed! If it be a true one, what are we

Calisthenes the philosopher, Aristotle's near relation, and Anaxarchus the Abderite, were called in. Calisthenes began in a soft and tender manner, endeavouring to relieve him, without searching the wound. But Anaxarchus, who had a particular walk in philosophy, and looked upon his fellow labourers in science with contempt, cried out, on entering the room, " Is this Alex- " ander, upon whom the whole world have their eyes? " Can it be he who lies extended on the ground, crying " like a slave in fear of the law, and the tongues of men, " *to whom he should himself be a law and the measure of* " *right and wrong?* What did he conquer for, but to rule " and to command, *not servilely to submit to the vain opin-* " *ions of men?* Know you not, (continued he) that " Jupiter is represented with Themis and Justice by " his side, to show, *that whatever is done by supreme* " *power is right?*" By this and other discourses of the same kind, *he alleviated the king's grief indeed, but made him withal more haughty and unjust.* At the same time he insinuated himself into his favour in so extraordinary a manner, that he could no longer bear the conversation of Calisthenes, who before was not very agreeable, on account of his austerity.

Langhorne's Plutarch, vol. 4. p. 294.

to think of a Douglas, a Campbell, a Gerard, a Reid, and some others, who have attacked several of Mr. HUME's opinions, and proved them to be contrary to truth, and subversive of the good of mankind? I thought indeed, that the works of these excellent writers had given great satisfaction to the friends of truth and virtue, and done an important service to society: but, if I believe this prefacer, I must look on them, as well as on this attempt of my own with detestation and horrour. But before so great a change in my sentiments can take place, it will be necessary that Mr. HUME prove, to my satisfaction, that he is neither the author nor the publisher of the *Essays* that bear his name, nor of the *Treatise of Human Nature*. For I will not take it on his, nor on any man's word, that religion, both revealed and natural, and all conviction in regard to truth, are detrimental to mankind. And it is most certain, that he, if he is indeed, the author of those essays, and of that treatise, hath exerted his great talents, and employed several years of his life, in endeavouring to persuade the world that the fundamental doctrines of natural religion are irrational, and the proofs of revealed religion such as ought not to satisfy an impartial mind; and that there is not in any science an evidence of truth sufficient to produce certainty. Suppose these opinions estab-

lished in the world, and say, if you can, that the good of mankind would be promoted by them. To me it seems impossible for society to exist under the influence of such opinions. Nor let it be thought, that we give an unfavourable view of human nature, when we insist on the necessity of good principles for the preservation of good order. Such a total subversion of human sentiment is, I believe, impossible: mankind, at their very worst, are not such monsters, as to admit it; reason, conscience, taste, habit, interest, fear, must perpetually oppose it: but the philosophy that aims at a total subversion of human sentiment is not on that account the less detestable. And yet it is said of the authors of this philosophy, that they exert their great talents in promoting the good of mankind. What an insult on human nature and common sense! If mankind are tame enough to acquiesce in such an insult, and servile enough to reply, "It is true, we have been "much obliged to the celebrated Scepticks of "this most enlightened age," they would almost tempt one to express himself in the style of misanthropy, and say, "Si populus vult decipi, deci-"piatur."

Every doctrine is dangerous that tends to discredit the evidence of our senses, external or internal, and to subvert the original instinctive

principles of human belief. In this respect the most unnatural and incomprehensible absurdities, such as the doctrine of the nonexistence of matter, and of perceptions without a percipient substance, are far from being harmless; as they seem to lead, and actually have led, to universal scepticism; and set an example of a method of reasoning sufficient to overturn all truth, and pervert every human faculty. In this respect also we have proved the doctrine of fatality to be of most pernicious tendency, as it leads men to suppose their moral sentiments fallacious or equivocal; not to mention its influence on our notions of God, and natural religion. When a Sceptick attacks one principle of common sense, he does in effect attack all; for if we are made distrustful of the veracity of instinctive conviction in one instance, we must, or at least we may, become equally distrustful in every other. A little scepticism introduced into science will soon assimilate the whole to its own nature; the fatal fermentation, once begun, spreads wider and wider every moment, till all the mass be transformed into rottenness and poison.

There is no exaggeration here. The present state of the abstract sciences is a melancholy proof, that what I say is true. This is called the age of reason and philosophy; and this is the age of

avowed and dogmatical atheism. Scepticks have at last grown weary of doubting; and have now discovered by the force of their *great talents*, that one thing at least is certain, namely, that God, and religion, and immortality, are empty sounds. This is the final triumph of our so much boasted philosophick spirit; these are the limits of the dominion of errour, beyond which we can hardly conceive it possible for human sophistry to penetrate. Exult, O Metaphysick, at the consummation of thy glories. More thou canst not hope, more thou canst not desire. Fall down, ye mortals, and acknowledge the stupendous blessing: adore those men of *great talents*, those daring spirits, those patterns of modesty, gentleness, and candour, those prodigies of genius, those heroes in beneficence, who have thus laboured, to strip you of every rational consolation, and to make your condition ten thousand times worse than that of the beasts that perish.

Why can I not express myself with less warmth! Why can I not devise an apology for these philosophers, to screen them from this dreadful imputation of being the enemies and plagues of mankind! Perhaps they do not themselves believe their own tenets, but publish them only as the means of getting a name and a fortune. But I hope this is not the case: God forbid that

it should! for then the enormity of their guilt would surpass all power of language; we could only gaze at it and tremble. Compared with such wickedness, the crimes of the thief, the robber, the incendiary, would almost disappear. These sacrifice the fortunes or the lives of some of their fellow creatures, to their own necessity or outrageous appetite: but those would run the hazard of sacrificing, to their own avarice or vanity, the happiness of mankind, both here and hereafter. No; I cannot suppose it: the heart of man, however depraved, is not capable of such malignity. Perhaps they do not foresee the consequences of their doctines. Berkeley most certainly did not. But Berkeley did not attack the religion of his country, did not seek to undermine the foundations of virtue, did not preach or recommend atheism. He erred; and who is free from error? but his intentions were irreproachable; and his conduct as a man, and a Christian, did honour to human nature. Perhaps our modern Scepticks are ignorant, that without the belief of a God, and the hope of immortality, the miseries of human life would often be insupportable. But can I suppose them in a state of total stupidity, utter strangers to the human heart, and to human affairs? Sure they would not thank me for such a

supposition. Yet this I must suppose, or I must believe them to be most perfidious and cruel.

Caressed by those who call themselves the great, ingrossed by the formalities and fopperies of life, intoxicated with vanity, pampered with adulation, dissipated in the tumult of business, or amidst the vicissitudes of folly, they perhaps have little need, and little relish, for the consolations of religion. But let them know, that, in the solitary scenes of life, there is many an honest and tender heart pining with incurable anguish, pierced with the sharpest sting of disappointment, bereft of friends, chilled with poverty, racked with disease, scourged by the oppressor; whom nothing but trust in Providence, and the hope of a future retribution, could preserve from the agonies of despair. And do they, with sacrilegious hands, attempt to violate this last refuge of the miserable, and to rob them of the only comfort that had survived the ravages of misfortune, malice, and tyranny? Did it ever happen, that the influence of their execrable tenets disturbed the tranquillity of virtuous retirement, deepened the gloom of human distress, or aggravated the horrours of the grave? Is it possible, that this may have happened in many instances? Is it probable, that this hath happened, or may happen, in one single instance? Ye traitors to human kind, how can ye answer

for it to your own hearts! Surely every spark of your generosity is extinguished for ever, if this consideration do not awaken in you the keenest remorse, and make you wish in bitterness of soul —But I remonstrate in vain. Could I enforce the present topick by an appeal to your vanity, I might perhaps make some impression: but to plead with you on the principles of benevolence or generosity, is to address you in language ye do not, or will not, understand.

But let not the lovers of truth be discouraged. Atheism cannot be of long continuance, nor is there any danger of its becoming universal. The influence of some conspicuous characters has brought it too much into fashion; which, in a thoughtless and profligate age, it is no difficult matter to accomplish. But when men have retrieved the powers of serious reflection, they will find it a frightful phantom; and the mind will return gladly and eagerly to its old endearments. One thing we certainly know: the fashion of sceptical systems soon passeth away. Those unnatural productions, the vile effusion of a hard heart, that mistakes its own restlessness for the activity of genius, and its own captiousness for sagacity of understanding, may, like other monsters, please awhile by their singularity; but the charm is soon over: and the succeeding age will be aston-

ished to hear, that their forefathers were deluded, or amused, with such fooleries. The measure of scepticism seems indeed to be full; it is time for truth to vindicate her rights, and we trust they shall yet be completely vindicated. Such are the hopes and the earnest wishes of one, who has seldom made controversy his study, who never took pleasure in argumentation, and who disclaims all ambition of being reputed a subtle disputant; but who, as a friend to human nature, would account it to his honour to be instrumental in promoting, though by means unpleasant to himself, the cause of virtue and true science, and in bringing to contempt that sceptical sophistry which is equally subversive of both.

POSTSCRIPT.

November, 1770.

TO read and criticise the modern systems of scepticism, is so disagreeable a task, that nothing but a regard to duty could ever have determined me to engage in it. I found in them neither instruction nor amusement; I wrote against them with all the disgust that one feels in wrangling with an unreasonable adversary; and I published what I had written, with the certain prospect of raising enemies, and with such an opinion of my performance, as allowed me not to entertain any sanguine hope of success. I thought it however possible, nay, and probable too, that this book might do good. I knew that it contained some matters of importance, which, if I was not able to set them in the best light, might however, by my means, be suggested to others more capable to do them justice.

Since these papers were first published, I have laid myself out to obtain information of what has been said of them, both by their friends, and by their enemies; hoping to profit by the censures

of the latter, as well as by the admonitions of the former. I do not hear, that any person has accused me of misconceiving or misrepresenting my adversaries' doctrine. Again and again have I requested it of those whom I know to be masters of the whole controversy, to give me their thoughts freely on this point; and they have repeatedly told me, that, in their judgment, nothing of this kind can be laid to my charge.

Most of the objections that have been made, I had foreseen, and, as I thought, sufficiently obviated by occasional remarks in the course of the essay. But, in regard to some of them, I find it necessary now to be more particular. I wish to give the fullest satisfaction to every candid mind: and I am sure I do not, on these subjects, entertain a single thought which I need be ashamed or afraid to lay before the publick.

I have been blamed for entering so warmly into this controversy. In order to prepossess the minds of those who had not read this performance, with an unfavourable opinion of it, and of its author, insinuations have been made, and carefully propagated, that it treats only of some abstruse points of speculative metaphysicks; which, however, I am accused of having discussed, or attempted to discuss, with all the zeal of a bigot, indulging myself in an indecent vehemence of

language, and uttering rancorous invectives against those who differ from me in opinion. Much, on this occasion, has been said in praise of moderation and scepticism; moderation, the source of candour, goodbreeding, and goodnature; and scepticism, the child of impartiality, and the parent of humility. When men believe with full conviction, nothing, it seems, is to be expected from them but bigotry and bitterness; when they suffer themselves in their inquiries to be warmed with affection, they are philosophers no longer, but revilers and enthusiasts! If this were a just account of the matter and manner of *the Essay on Truth*, I should not have the face even to attempt an apology; for were any person guilty of the fault here complained of, I myself should certainly be one of the first to condemn him.

In the whole circle of human sciences, real or pretended, there is not any thing to be found which I think more perfectly contemptible, than the speculative metaphysicks of the moderns. It is indeed a most wretched medley of ill digested notions, indistinct perceptions, inaccurate observations, perverted language, and sophistical argument; distinguishing where there is no difference, and confounding where there is no similitude; feigning difficulties where it cannot find them, and overlooking them when real. I know

manners must generally deviate, more or less, from the simplicity of nature: and that, consequently, human sentiments must be of more difficult investigation than under some other forms. In courts, it seems requisite, for the sake of that order which is essential to dignity, to establish certain punctilios in dress, language, and gesture: there too, the most inviolable secrecy is expedient: and there, where men are always under the eye of their superiours, and for the most part engaged in the pursuits of ambition or interest, a smoothness of behaviour will naturally take place, which among persons of ordinary talents, and ordinary virtue, must on many occasions degenerate into hypocrisy. The customs of the court are always imitated by the higher ranks; the middle ranks follow the higher; and the people come after as fast as they can. It is, however, in the last mentioned class, where nature appears with the least disguise: but unhappily for moral science, the vulgar are seldom objects of curiosity, either to our philosophers, or historians.

The influence of these causes, in distinguishing human sentiments, will, I presume, be greater or less, according as the monarchy partakes more or less of democratical principles. There is, indeed, one set of sentiments, which monarchy and modern manners are peculiarly fitted for dis-

closing, I mean those that relate to gallantry: and it is evident, that these (taking the word gallantry in the best sense) tend in some respects to render society comfortable, and to enlarge the sphere of comick writing; but whether to make the essential principles of human nature more or less known, might perhaps bear a question.

Modern history ought, on many accounts, to interest us more than the ancient. It describes manners that are familiar to us, events whereof we see and feel the consequences, political establishments on which our property and security depend, and places and persons in which experience or tradition has already given us a concern. And yet I believe it will be acknowledged, that the ancient histories, particularly of Greece and Rome, are more interesting than those of latter times. In fact, the most affecting part, both of history and of poetry, is that which best displays the characters, manners, and sentiments of men. Histories that are deficient in this respect, may communicate instruction to the geographer, the warriour, the genealogist, and the politician; but will never please the general taste, because they excite no passion, and awaken no sympathy. Now, I cannot help thinking, that the personages described in modern history have, with a very few exceptions, a stiffness and re-

serve about them, which doth not seem to adhere to the great men of antiquity, particularly of Greece. I will not say, that our historians have less ability or less industry; but I would say, that democratical governments, like those of ancient Greece, are more favourable to simplicity of manners, and consequently to the knowledge of the human mind, than our modern monarchies. At Athens and Sparta, the publick assemblies, the publick exercises, the regular attendance given to all the publick solemnities, whether religious or civil, and other institutions that might be mentioned, gave the citizens many opportunities of being well acquainted with one another. There the great men were not cooped up in palaces and coaches; they were almost constantly in the open air, and on foot. The people saw them every day, conversed with them, and observed their behaviour in the hours of relaxation, as well as of business. Themistocles could call every citizen of Athens by his name; a proof that the great men courted an universal acquaintance.

No degree of genius will ever make one a proficient in the science of man, without accurate observation of human nature in all its varieties. Homer, the greatest master in this science ever known, passed the most of his life in travelling: his poverty, and other misfortunes, made him

often dependent on the meanest, as his talents recommended him to the friendship of the greatest; so that what he says of Ulysses may justly be applied to himself, that "he visited many states and nations, and knew the characters of many men." Virgil had not the same opportunities: he lived in an age of more refinement, and was perhaps too much conversant in courtly life, as well as too bashful in his deportment, and delicate in his constitution, to study the varieties of human nature, where in a monarchy they are most conspicuous, namely in the middle and lower ranks of mankind. Need we wonder, then, that in the display of character he falls so far short of his great original? Shakspeare was familiarly acquainted with all ranks and conditions of men; without which, notwithstanding his unbounded imagination, it is not to be supposed, that he could have succeeded so well in delineating every species of human character, from the constable to the monarch, from the hero to the clown. And it deserves our notice, that, however ignorant he might be of Latin and Greek, he was well acquainted, by translation, with some of the ancients, particularly Plutarch, whom he seems to have studied with much attention, and who indeed excels all historians in exhibiting lively and interesting views of human nature. Great vicissitudes

and are they to be considered as patterns of humility, who set the wisdom of all former ages at nought, bid defiance to the common sense of mankind, and say to the wisest and best men that ever did honour to our nature, Ye are fools or hypocrites; we only are candid, honest, and sagacious! Is this humility! Should I be humble, if I were to speak and act in this manner! Every man of sense would pronounce me lost to all shame, an apostate from truth and virtue, an enemy to human kind; and my own conscience would justify the censure.

And so it seems that pride of understanding is inseparable from the disposition of those who believe, that they have a soul, that there is a God, that virtue and vice are essentially different, and that men are in some cases permitted to discern the difference between truth and falsehood! Yet the gospel requires or supposes the belief of all these points: the gospel also commands us to be humble: and the spirit and influence of the gospel have produced the most perfect examples of that virtue that ever appeared among men. A believer may be proud; but it is neither his belief, nor what he believes, that can make him so, for both ought to teach him humility. To call in question, and labour to subvert, those first principles of science, morality, and religion, which

all the rational part of mankind acknowledge, is indeed an indication of a presumptuous understanding: but does the Sceptick lay this to the charge of the believer? I have heard of a thief, when close pursued, turning on his pursuers, and charging them with robbery: but I do not think the example worthy a philosopher's imitation.

The prevention of bigotry is said to be another of the blessed effects of this modern scepticism. And indeed, if Scepticks would act consistently with their own principles, there would be ground for the remark: for a man who believes nothing at all, cannot be said to be blindly attached to any opinion, except perhaps this one, that nothing is to be believed; in which, however, if he have any regard to uniformity of character, he will take care not to be dogmatical. But it is well known to all who have had any opportunity of observing his conduct, that the Sceptick rejects those opinions only which the rest of mankind admit: for that, in regard to his own paradoxes, he is as dogmatical as other people. An ingenious author has therefore, with good reason, made it one of the articles of the infidel's creed, That, "he believes in all unbelief."* Though a late writer is a perfect Sceptick in regard to the existence

* Connoisseur, No. 9.

of his soul and body, he is certain, that men have no idea of power: though he has many doubts and difficulties about the evidence of mathematical truth, he is quite positive, that his soul is not the same thing to day it was yesterday: and though he affirms, that it is by an act of the human understanding, that two and two have come to be equal to four; yet he cannot allow, that to steal or to abstain from stealing, to act or to cease from action, is in the power of any man. In reading sceptical books, I have often found, that the strength of the author's attachment to his paradox, is in proportion to its absurdity. If it deviates but a little from common opinion, he gives himself but little trouble about it; if it be inconsistent with universal belief, he condescends to argue the matter, and to bring what with him passes for a proof of it; if it be such as no man ever did or could believe, he is still more conceited of his proof, and calls it a demonstration; but if it is inconceivable, it is a wonder if he does not take it for granted. Thus, that our idea of extension is extended, is inconceivable; and in the *Treatise of Human Nature* seems to be taken for granted: that matter exists only in the mind that perceives it, is what no man ever did or could believe; and the author of the *Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* has favoured

the world with what passes among the fashionable metaphysicians for a demonstration of it: that moral and intellectual virtues are upon the same footing, is inconsistent with universal belief: and a famous author has argued the matter at large, and would fain persuade us, that he has proved it; though I do not recollect, that he triumphs in this proof as so irresistible, as those by which he conceives himself to have annihilated the idea of power, and exploded the permanency of percipient substances. I will not say, however, that this gradation holds universally. Scepticks, it must be owned, bear a right zealous attachment to all their absurdities, both greater and less. If they are most warmly interested in behalf of the former, it is, I suppose, because they have had the sagacity to foresee, that those would stand most in need of protection.

We see now how far scepticism may be said to prevent bigotry. It prevents all bigotry, and all strong attachment on the side of truth and common sense; but in behalf of its own paradoxes, it establishes bigotry the most implicit and the most obstinate. It is true, that Scepticks sometimes tell us, that, however positively they may assert their doctrines, they would not have us think them positive asserters of any doctrine. Sextus Empiricus has done this; and

some too, if I mistake not, of our modern Pyrrhonists. But common readers are not capable of such exquisite refinement, as to believe their author to be in earnest, and at the same time not in earnest; as to believe, that when he asserts some points with diffidence, and others with the utmost confidence, he holds himself to be equally diffident of all.

There is but one way in which it is possible for a Sceptick to satisfy us, that he is equally doubtful of all doctrines. He must assert nothing, lay down no principles, contradict none of the opinions of other people, and advance none of his own: in a word, he must confine his doubts to his own breast, at least the grounds of his doubts; or propose them modestly and privately, not with a view to make us change our mind, but only to show his own diffidence. For from the moment he attempts to obtrude them on the publick, or on any individual, or even to represent the opinions of others as less probable than his own, he commences a dogmatist; and is to be accounted more or less presumptuous, according as his doctrine is more or less repugnant to common sense, and himself more or less industrious to recommend it.

Though he were to content himself with urging objections, without seeking to lay down any

principle of his own, which however is a degree of moderation that no Sceptick ever yet arrived at, we would not on that account pronounce him an inoffensive man. If his objections have ever weakened the moral or religious belief of any one person, he has injured that person in his dearest and most important concerns. They who know the value of true religion, and have had any opportunity of observing its effects on themselves or others, need not be told, how dreadful to a sensible mind it is, to be staggered in its faith by the cavils of the infidel. Every person of common humanity, who knows any thing of the heart of man, would shudder at the thought of infusing scepticism into the pious Christian. Suppose the Christian to retain his faith, in spite of all objections; yet the confutation of these cannot fail to distress him; and a habit of doubting, once begun, may, to the latest hour of his life, prove fatal to his peace of mind. Let no one mistake or misrepresent me: I am not speaking of those points of doctrine which rational believers allow to be indifferent: I speak of those great and most essential articles of faith; the existence of a Deity, infinitely wise, beneficent, and powerful; the certainty of a future state of retribution; and the divine authority of the gospel. These are the articles which some late

authors labour with all their might to overturn; and these are the articles which every person who loves virtue and mankind, would wish to see ardently and zealously defended. Is it bigotry to believe these sublime truths with full assurance of faith? I glory in such bigotry. I would not part with it for a thousand worlds: I congratulate the man who is possessed of it; for, amidst all the vicissitudes and calamities of the present state, that man enjoys a fund of consolation, of which it is not in the power of fortune to deprive him. Calamities, did I say? The evils of a very short life will not be accounted such by him who has a near and certain prospect of a happy eternity. Will it be said, that the firm belief of these divine truths did ever give rise to illnature or persecution? It will not be said, by any person who is acquainted with history, or the human mind. Of such belief, when sincere, and undebased by criminal passions, meekness, benevolence, and forgiveness, are the natural and necessary effects. There is not a book on earth so favourable to all the kind, and all the sublime affections, or so unfriendly to hatred and persecution, to tyranny, injustice, and every sort of malevolence, as that very gospel against which our Scepticks entertain such a rancorous antipathy. Of this they cannot be ignorant, if they have

ever read it; for it breathes nothing throughout, but mercy, benevolence, and peace. If they have not read it, they and their prejudices are as contemptible, as any thing so hateful can be: if they have, their pretended concern for the rights of mankind is all hyprocrisy and a lie. Nor need they attempt to frame an answer to this accusation, till they have proved, that the morality of the gospel is faulty or imperfect: that virtue is not useful to individuals, nor beneficial to society; that the evils of life are most effectually alleviated by the extinction of hope; that annihilation is a more encouraging prospect to virtue, than the certain view of eternal happiness; that nothing is a greater check to vice, than a firm persuasion that no punishment awaits it; and that it is a consideration full of misery to a good man, when weeping on the grave of a beloved friend, to reflect, that they shall soon meet again in a better state, never to part any more.

I wonder at those men who charge upon christianity all the evils that superstition, avarice, sensuality, and the love of power, have introduced into the christian world; and then suppose, that these evils are to be prevented, not by suppressing criminal passions, but by extirpating christianity, or weakening its influence. In fact, our religion supplies the only effectual means of

suppressing these passions, and so preventing the mischief complained of; and this it will ever be more or less powerful to accomplish, according as its influence over the minds of men is greater or less; and greater or less will its influence be, according as its doctrines are more or less firmly believed. It was not because they were Christians, but because they were covetous and cruel, that the first invaders of America perpetrated those diabolical cruelties in Peru and Mexico, the narrative of which is insupportable to humanity. Had they been Christians in any thing but in name, they would have loved their neighbour as themselves; and no man who loves his neighbour as himself, will ever cut his throat, or roast him alive, in order to get at his money.

If zeal be warrantable on any occasion, it must be so in the present controversy: for I know of no doctrines more important in themselves, or more affecting to a sensible mind, than those which the scepticism I controvert tends to overturn. But why, it may be said, should zeal be warrantable on any occasion? The answer is easy: because on some occasions it is decent and natural. When a man is deeply interested in his subject, it is not natural for him to keep up the appearance of as much coolness, as if he were disputing about an indifferent matter: and what-

ever is not natural is offensive. Were he to hear his dearest friends branded with the appellation of knaves and ruffians, would it be natural, would it be decent, for him to preserve the same indifference in his look, and softness in his manner, as if he were investigating a truth in conick sections, arguing about the cause of the aurora borealis, or settling a point of ancient history? Ought he not to show, by the sharpness as well as by the solidity of his reply, that he not only disavows, but detests the accusation? Is there a man whose indignation would not kindle at such an insult? Is there a man who would be so much overawed by any antagonist, as to conceal his indignation? Of such a man I shall only say, that I would not choose him for my friend. When our subject lies near our heart, our language must be animated, or it will be worse than lifeless; it will be affected and hypocritical. Now what subject can lie nearer the heart of a Christian, or of a man, than the existence and perfections of God, and the immortality of the human soul? If he cannot, if he ought not, to hear with patience the blasphemies uttered by unthinking profligates in their common conversation, with what temper of mind will he listen or reply to the cool, insidious, and envenomed impieties of the deliberate atheist! Fy on it! that I should need to write so long an

apology for being an enemy to atheism and nonsense!

"But why engage in the controversy at all? "Let the infidel do his worst, and heap sophism "on sophism, and rail, and blaspheme as long as "he pleases; if your religion be from God, or "founded in reason, it cannot be overthrown. "Why then give yourself or others any trouble "with your attempts to support a cause, against "which it is said that hell itself shall not pre-"vail?" This objection has been made, and urged too with confidence. It has just as much weight as the following. Why enact laws against, or inflict punishment upon murderers? Let them do their worst, and stab, and strangle, and poison, as much as they please, they will never be able to accomplish the final extermination of the human species, nor perhaps to depopulate a single province. Such idle talk deserves no answer, or but a very short one. We do believe, and therefore we rejoice, that our religion shall flourish in spite of all the sophistry of malevolent men. But is their sophistry the less wicked on that account? Does it not deserve to be punished with ridicule and confutation? Have we reason to hope, that a miracle will be wrought to save any individual from infidelity, or even any believer from those doubts and apprehensions which the writings of

infidels are intended to raise? And is it not worth our while, is it not our duty, ought it not to be our inclination, to endeavour to prevent such a calamity? Nor let us imagine that this is the business of the clergy alone. They, no doubt, are best qualified for this service; but we of the laity who believe the gospel, are under the same obligation to wish well, and, according to our ability, to do good to our fellow creatures. For my own part, though the writing of this book had been a work of much greater difficulty than I found it to be, I would have cheerfully undertaken it, in the hope of being instrumental in reclaiming even a single Sceptick from his unhappy prejudices, or in preserving even a single believer from the horrours of scepticism. Tell me not, that those horrours have no existence. I know the contrary. Tell me not, that the good ends proposed can never in any degree be accomplished by performances of this kind. Of this too I know the contrary.

Suppose a set of men, subjects of the British government, to publish books setting forth, that liberty, both civil and religious, is an absurdity; that trial by juries, the *habeas corpus* act, magna charta, and the protestant religion, are intolerable nuisances; and that popery, despotism, and the inquisition, ought immediately

to be established throughout the British empire; suppose them to exhort their countrymen to overturn or at least to disregard, our excellent laws and constitution, and make a tender of their souls and consciences to the pope, and of their lives and fortunes to the king of France; and suppose them to write so cautiously as to escape the censure of the law, and yet with plausibility sufficient to seduce many, and give rise to much dissatisfaction, discord, and licentious practice, equally fatal to the happiness of individuals and to the publick peace: with what temper would an Englishman of sense and spirit set about confuting their principles? Would it be decent, or even pardonable, to handle such a subject with coolness, or to behave with complaisance towards such adversaries? Suppose them to have specious qualities, and to pass with their own party for men of candour, genius, and learning: yet the lover of liberty and mankind would not, I presume, be disposed to pay them any excessive compliments on that account, or on any other. But suppose these political apostates to appear, in the course of the controversy, chargeable with ignorance and sophistical reasoning, with evasive and quibbling refinements, with misrepresentation of common facts, and misapprehension of common language, more attached to hypothesis

than to the truth, preferring their own conceits to the common sense of mankind, and seeking to gratify their own exorbitant vanity and lust of paradox, though at the expense of the happiness of millions: with what face could their most implicit admirers complain of the severity of that antagonist who should treat both them and their principles with contempt and indignation? with what face urge in their defence, that though perhaps somewhat blamable on the present occasion, they and their works were notwithstanding intitled to universal esteem, and the most respectful usage, on account of their skill in musick, architecture, geometry, and the Greek and Latin tongues! On this account, would they be in any less degree the pests of society, or the enemies of mankind? would their false reasoning be less sophistical, their presumption less arrogant, or their malevolence less atrocious? Do not the men who, like Alexander, Machiavel, and the author of La Pucelle d'Orleans, employ their great talents in destroying and corrupting mankind, aggravate all their other crimes by the dreadful addition of ingratitude and breach of trust? And are not their characters, for this very reason, the more obnoxious to universal abhorrence? An illiterate blockhead in the Robinhood tavern, blaspheming the Saviour

of mankind, or labouring to confound the distinctions of vice and virtue, is a wicked wretch, no doubt; but his wickedness admits of some shadow of excuse; he might plead his ignorance, his stupidity; and the still more profligate lives and principles of those whom the world, by a preposterous figure of speech, is pleased to call his betters: but the men of parts and learning, who join the same infernal cry, are criminals of a higher order; for in their defence nothing can be pleaded that will not aggravate their guilt.

My design in this book was to give others the very same notions of the sceptical philosophy that I myself entertain; which I could not have done, if I had not taken the liberty to deliver my thoughts plainly and without reserve. And truly I saw no reason for being more indulgent to the writings of Scepticks, than to those of other men. The taste of the publick requires not any such extraordinary condescension. If ever it should, which is not probable, we may then think it prudent to comply; but, as we scorn, in matters of such moment, to express ourselves by halves, we will then also throw pen and ink aside, never to be resumed until we again find, that we may with safety write, and be honest at the same time.

Infidels take it upon them to treat religion

and its friends with opprobrious language, misrepresentation, undeserved ridicule, and divers other sorts of abuse. Some of them assert, with the most dogmatical assurance, what they know to be contrary to the common sense of mankind. All this passes for wit, and eloquence, and liberal inquiry, and a manly spirit. But whenever the friends of truth espouse, with warmth, that cause which they know to be agreeable to common sense and universal opinion, this is called *bigotry:* and whenever the Christian vindicates, with earnestness, those principles which he believes to be of the highest importance, and which he knows to be essential to the happiness of man, immediately he is charged with want of moderation, want of temper, enthusiasm, and the spirit of persecution. Far be it from the lover of truth to imitate those authors in misrepresentation, or in endeavouring to expose their adversaries to unmerited ridicule. But if a man were to obtain a patent for vending poison, it would be very hard to deny his neighbour the privilege of selling the antidote. If their zeal in spreading and recommending their doctrines be suffered to pass without censure, our zeal in vindicating ours has at least as good a title to pass uncensured. If this is not allowed, I must suppose that the present race of infidels, like the *jure*

divino kings, imagine themselves invested with some peculiar sanctity of character; that whatever they are pleased to say is to be received as law; and that to contradict their will, or even address them without prostration, is indecent and criminal. I know not whence it is that they assume these airs of superiority. Is it from the high rank some of them hold in the world of letters? I would have them know, that it is but a short time since that high rank was either yielded to, or claimed by, such persons. Spinoza, Hobbes, Collins, Woolston, and the rest of that tribe, were within these forty or fifty years accounted a very contemptible brotherhood. The great geniuses of the last age treated them with little ceremony; and would not, I suppose, were they now alive, pay more respect to imitators, than they did to the original authors. If the enemies of our religion would profit by experience, they might learn, from the fate of some of their most renowned brethren, that infidelity, however fashionable and lucrative, is not the most convenient field for a successful display of genius. Ever since Voltaire, stimulated by avarice, and other dotages incident to unprincipled old age, formed the scheme of turning a penny by writing against the christian religion, he has dwindled from a genius of no common magni-

tude into a paltry book maker; and now thinks he does great and terrible things, by retailing the crude and long exploded notions of the free-thinkers of the last age, which, when seasoned with a few mistakes, misrepresentations, and ribaldries of his own, form such a mess of falsehood, impiety, obscenity, and other abominable ingredients, as nothing but the monstrous maw of an illiterate infidel can either digest or endure. Several of our famous Scepticks have lived to see the greatest part of their profane tenets confuted. I hope, and earnestly wish, that they may live to make a full recantation. Some of them must have known, and many of them might have known, that their tenets were confuted before they adopted them: yet did they adopt them notwithstanding, and display them to the world with as much confidence as if nothing had ever been advanced on the other side. So have I seen a testy and stubborn dogmatist, when all his arguments were answered, and all his invention exhausted, comfort himself at last with simply repeating his former positions at the end of each new remonstrance from the adversary.

They who are conversant in the works of the sceptical philosophers, know very well, that those gentlemen do not always maintain that moderation of style which might be expected

from persons of their profession; and if I thought my conduct in this respect needed to be, or could be, justified by such a precedent, I might plead even their example as my apology. But I disclaim every plea that such a precedent could afford me: I write not in the spirit of retaliation; and when I find myself inclined to be an imitator, I will look out for other models. Indeed it is hardly to be supposed, that I would take those for my pattern, whose principles and projects are so directly opposite to mine. Their writings tend to subvert the foundations of human knowledge, to poison the sources of human happiness, and to overturn that religion which the best and wisest men have believed to be of divine original, and which every good man, who understands it, must reverence as the greatest blessing ever conferred upon the human race. I write with a view to counteract these tendencies, by vindicating some fundamental articles of religion and science from the sceptical objections, and by showing, that no man can attempt to disprove the first principles of knowledge without contradicting himself. To the common sense of mankind, they scruple not to oppose their own conceits, as if they judged these to be more worthy of credit than any other authority, human or divine. I urge nothing with any degree

of confidence or fervour, in which I have not good reason to think myself warranted by the common sense of mankind. Does their cause, then, or does mine, deserve the warmest attachment? Have they, or have I, the most need to guard against vehemence of expression?* As certainly as the happiness of mankind is a desirable object, so certainly is my cause good, and theirs evil.

To conclude: Liberty of speech and writing is one of those high privileges that distinguish Great Britain from all other nations. Every good subject wishes, that it may be preserved to the latest posterity: and would be sorry to see the

* "There is no satisfying the demands of false delicacy," says an elegant and pious author, "because "they are not regulated by any fixed standard. But a "man of candour and judgment will allow, that the "bashful timidity practised by those who put themselves on a level with the adversaries of religion, "would ill become one who, declining all disputes, "asserts primary truths on the authority of common "sense; and that whoever pleads the cause of religion "in this way, has a right to assume a firmer tone, and "to pronounce with a more decisive air, not upon the "strength of his own judgment, but on the reverence "due from all mankind to the tribunal to which he appeals."

Oswald's Appeal in behalf of Religion, p. 14

civil power interpose to check the progress of rational inquiry. Nay, when inquiry ceases to be rational, and becomes both whimsical and pernicious, advancing as far as some late authors have carried it, to controvert the first principles of knowledge, morality, and religion, and consequently the fundamental laws of the British government, and of all well regulated society; even then, it must do more hurt than good to oppose it with the arm of flesh. For persecution and punishment for the sake of opinion, seldom fail to strengthen the party they are intended to suppress; and when opinions are combated by such weapons only, (which would probably be the case if the law were to interpose) a suspicion arises in the minds of men, that no other weapons are to be had; and therefore that the sectary, though destitute of power, is not wanting in argument. Let opinions then be combated by reason, and let ridicule be employed to expose nonsense. And to keep our licentious authors in awe, and to make it their interest to think before they write, to examine facts before they draw inferences, to read books before they criticise them, and to study both sides of a question before they take it upon them to give judgment, it would not be amiss, if their vices and follies, as authors, were sometimes chastised by a satirical severity

of expression. This is a proper punishment for their fault; this punishment they certianly deserve; and this it is not beneath the dignity of a philosopher, or divine, or any man who loves God and his fellow creatures, to inflict. Milton, Locke, Cudworth, Sidney, Tillotson, and several of the greatest and best writers of the present age, have set the example; and have, I doubt not, done good by their nervous and animated expression, as well as by the solidity of their arguments. This punishment, if inflicted with discretion, might teach our licentious authors something of modesty, and of deference to the judgment of mankind; and, it is to be hoped, would in time bring down that spirit of presumption, and affected superiority, which hath of late distinguished their writings, and contributed, more perhaps than all their subtlety and sophistry, to the seduction of the ignorant, the unwary, and the fashionable. It is true, the best of causes may be pleaded with an excess of warmth; as when the advocate is so blinded by his zeal, as to lose sight of his argument; or as when, in order to render his adversaries odious, he alludes to such particulars of their character or private history as are not to be gathered from their writings. The former fault never fails to injure the cause which the writer means to defend: the latter

which is properly termed *personal abuse*, is in itself so hateful, that every person of common prudence would be inclined to avoid it for his own sake, even though he were not restrained by more weighty motives. If an author's writings be subversive of virtue, and dangerous to private happiness, and the publick good, we ought to hold them in detestation, and, in order to counteract their baneful tendency, to endeavour to render them detestable in the eyes of others; thus far we act the part of honest men, and good citizens: but with his private history we have no concern; nor with his character, except so far as he has thought proper to submit to the publick judgment, by displaying it in his works. When these are of that peculiar sort, that we cannot expose them in their proper colours, without reflecting on his abilities and moral character, we ought by no means to sacrifice our love of truth and mankind to a complaisance, which, if we are what we pretend to be, and ought to be, would be hypocritical at best, as well as mockery of the publick, and treachery to our cause. The good of society is always to be considered as a matter of higher importance than the gratification of an author's vanity. If he does not think of this in time, and take care that the latter be consistent with the former, he has himself to

blame for all the consequences. The severity of Collier's attack upon the stage, in the end of the last century, was, even in the judgment of one* who thought it excessive, and who will not be suspected of partiality to that author's doctrine, productive of very good effects; as it obliged the succeeding dramatick poets to curb that propension to indecency, which had carried some of their predecessors so far beyond the bounds of good taste and good manners. If we are not permitted to answer the objections of the infidel as plainly, and with as little reserve, as he makes them, we engage him on unequal terms. And many will be disposed to think most favourably of that cause, whose adherents display the greatest ardour; and some, perhaps, may be tempted to impute to timidity, or to a secret diffidence of our principles, what might have been owing to a much more pardonable weakness.

For my own part, though I have always been, and shall always be, happy in applauding excellence wherever I find it; yet neither the pomp of wealth nor the dignity of office, neither the frown of the great nor the sneer of the fashionable, neither the sciolist's clamour nor the profligate's resentment, shall ever soothe or frighten me

* Colley Cibber. See his Apology, vol. i. p. 201

into an admiration, real or pretended, of impious tenets, sophistical reasoning, or that paltry metaphysick with which literature has been so disgraced and pestered of late years. I am not so much addicted to controversy, as ever to enter into any but what I judge to be of very great importance; and into such controversy I cannot, I will not, enter with coolness and unconcern. If I should, I might please a party, but I must offend the publick; I might escape the censure of those whose praise I would not value, but I should justly forfeit the esteem of good men, and incur the disapprobation of my own conscience.

AN ESSAY

ON

POETRY AND MUSICK.

AS THEY

AFFECT THE MIND.

Written in the Year 1762.

AN ESSAY

ON

POETRY AND MUSICK.

THE rules of every useful art may be divided into two kinds. Some are necessary to the accomplishment of the end proposed by the artist, and are therefore denominated essential rules; while others, called ornamental or mechanical, have no better foundation than the practice of some great performer, whom it has become the fashion to imitate. The latter are to be learned from the communications of the artist, or by observing his work: the former may be investigated upon the principles of reason and philosophy.

These two classes of rules, however different, have often been confounded by critical writers, without any material injury to the art, or any great inconvenience to the artist or to his disciple. For frequently it happens, that fashion and

philosophy coincide; and that an artist gives the law in his profession, whose principles are as just as his performance is excellent. Such has been the fate of POETRY in particular. Homer, whom we consider as the founder of this art, because we have none more ancient to refer to, appears, in the structure of his two poems, to have proceeded upon a view of things equally comprehensive and rational: nor had Aristotle, in laying down the philosophy of the art, any thing more to do, than to trace out the principles of his contrivance. What the great critick has left on this subject, proves Homer to have been no less admirable as a philosopher than as a poet; possessed not only of unbounded imagination, and all the powers of language, but also of a most exact judgment, which could at once propose a noble end, and devise the very best means of attaining it.

An art, thus founded on reason, could not fail to be durable. The propriety of the Homerick mode of invention has been acknowledged by the learned in all ages; every real improvement which particular branches of the art may have received since his time, has been conducted upon his principles; and poets who never heard of his name, have, merely by their own good sense, been prompted to tread the path, which he, guid-

ed by the same internal monitor, had trod before them. And hence, notwithstanding its apparent licentiousness, true poetry is a thing perfectly rational and regular; and nothing can be more strictly philosophical, than that part of criticism may and ought to be, which unfolds the general characters that distinguish it from other kinds of composition.

Whether the following discourse will in any degree justify this last remark, is submitted to the reader. It aspires to little other praise, than that of plain language and familiar illustration; disclaiming all paradoxical opinions and refined theories, which are indeed showy in the appearance, and not of difficult invention, but have no tendency to diffuse knowledge, or enlighten the human mind; and which, in matters of taste that have been canvassed by mankind these two thousand years, would seem to be peculiarly incongruous.

The train of thought that led me into this inquiry, was suggested by a conversation many years ago, in which I had taken the freedom to offer an opinion different from what was maintained by the company, but warranted, as I then thought, and still think, by the greatest authorities and the best reasons. It was pleaded against me, that taste is capricious, and criticism varia-

ble; and that the rules of Aristotle's Poeticks, being founded in the practice of Sophocles and Homer, ought not to be applied to the poems of other ages and nations. I admitted the plea, as far as these rules are local and temporary; but asserted, that many of them, being founded in nature, were indispensable, and could not be violated without such impropriety, as, though overlooked by some, would always be offensive to the greater part of readers, and obstruct the general end of poetical composition: and that it would be no less absurd, for a poet to violate the *essential* rules of his art, and justify himself by an appeal from the tribunal of Aristotle, than for a mechanick to construct an engine on principles inconsistent with the laws of motion, and excuse himself by disclaiming the authority of Sir Isaac Newton.

The characters that distinguish poetry from other works of literature, belong either to the SUBJECT, or to the LANGUAGE: so that this discourse naturally resolves itself into two parts. What we have to say on musick will be found to belong to the first.

AN ESSAY

ON

POETRY AND MUSICK.

PART I.

POETRY CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO ITS MATTER OR SUBJECT.

WHEN we affirm, that every art or contrivance which has a meaning must have an end, we only repeat an identical proposition: and when we say, that the essential or indispensable rules of an art are those that direct to the accomplishment of the end proposed by the artist, we repeat a definition whereof it would be captious to controvert the propriety. And therefore, before we can determine any thing in regard to the essential rules of this art, we must form an idea of its END OR DESTINATION.

CHAPTER I.

Of the End of Poetical Composition.

THAT one end of poetry, in its first institution, and in every period of its progress, must have been, TO GIVE PLEASURE, will hardly admit of any doubt. If men first employed it to express their adoration of superiour and invisible beings, their gratitude to the benefactors of mankind, their admiration of moral, intellectual, or corporeal excellence, or of other parts of nature; they must be supposed to have endeavoured to make their poetry *pleasing;* because, otherwise, it would have been unsuitable to the occasion that gave it birth, and to the sentiments it was intended to enliven. Or if, with Horace, we were to believe, that it was first used as a vehicle to convey into savage minds the principles of government and civility;* still we must allow, that

* The honour of civilizing mankind, is by the poets ascribed to poetry, (*Hor. Ar. Poet. vers.* 391.); by the orator, to oratory, (*Cicero de Orat. lib.* 1. § 33.) and by

one chief thing attended to in its composition must have been, to give it charms sufficient to engage the ear and captivate the heart of an unthinking audience. In latter times, the true poet, though in choosing materials, he never lost sight of utility, yet in giving them form, (and it is the *form* chiefly that distinguishes poetry from other writings) has always made the entertainment of mankind his principal concern. Indeed we cannot conceive, that, independently on this consideration, men would ever have applied themselves to arts so little necessary to life, and withal so difficult, as musick, painting, and poetry. Certain it is, that a poem, containing the most important truths, would meet with a cold reception, if destitute of those graces of sound, invention, and language, whereof the sole end and aim is, to give pleasure.

But is it not the end of this art, *to instruct*, as well as *to please?* Verses, that give pleasure only, without profit—what are they but chiming trifles? And if a poem were to please, and at the same

others to philosophy, (*Cicero de Orat. lib.* 1. § 36, 37. and *Tusc. Quest. lib.* 5. § 5.) It is probably a gradual thing, the effect of many cooperating causes, and proceeding rather from favourable accidents, or the special appointment of heaven, than from the art and contrivance of men.

time, instead of improving, to corrupt the mind, would it not deserve to be considered as a poison rendered doubly dangerous and detestable by its alluring qualities? All this is true: and yet pleasure is undoubtedly the immediate aim of all those artifices by which poetry is distinguished from other compositions—of the harmony, the rhythm, the ornamented language, the compact and diversified fable: for I believe it will be allowed, that a plain treatise, destitute of all these beauties, might be made to convey more instruction than any poem in the world. As writing is more excellent than painting, and speech than musick, on account of its superiour usefulness; so a discourse containing profitable information even in a rude style, may be more excellent, because more useful, than any thing in Homer or Virgil: but such a discourse partakes no more of the nature of poetry, than language does of melody, or a manuscript of a picture; whereas an agreeable piece of writing may be poetical, though it yield little or no instruction. To instruct, is an end common to all good writing: to all poetry, all history, all sound philosophy. But of these last the principal end is to instruct; and if this single end be accomplished, the philosopher and the historian will be allowed to have acquitted themselves well: but the poet must do a great deal for the

sake of pleasure only; and if he fail to please, he may indeed deserve praise on other accounts, but as a poet he has done nothing. But do not historians and philosophers, as well as poets, make it their study to please their readers? They generally do: but the former please that they may instruct; the latter instruct, that they may the more effectually please. Pleasing, though uninstructive, poetry may gratify a light mind; and what tends even to corrupt the heart, may gratify profligates: but the true poet addresses his work, not to the giddy, nor to the worthless, nor to any party, but to mankind; and if he means to please the *general* taste, must often employ instruction as one of the arts that minister to this kind of pleasure.

The necessity of this arises from a circumstance in human nature, which is to man (as Erasmus in Pope's opinion was to the priesthood) "at once his glory and his shame;" namely, that the human mind, unless when debased by passion or prejudice, never fails to take the side of truth and virtue: a sad reflection, when it leads us to consider the debasing influence of passion and prejudice; but a most comfortable one when it directs our view to the original dignity and rectitude of the human soul. To favour virtue, and speak truth, and take pleasure in those who do so, is natural to man; to act otherwise, requires

an effort, does violence to nature, and always implies some evil purpose in the agent. The first, like progressive motion, is easy and graceful; the last is unseemly and difficult, like walking sideways, or backwards. The one is so common, that it is little attended to, and when it becomes the object of attention, is always considered as an energy suitable to moral and rational nature: the other has a strangeness in it, that provokes at once our surprise and disapprobation. And hence the virtuous character of the ancient chorus* was

* Actoris partes chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat ———
Ille bonis faveatque, et consilietur amice,
Et regat iratos, et amet pacare tumentes;
Ille dapes laudet mensæ brevis; ille salubrem
Justitiam, legesque, et apertis otia portis;
Ille tegat commissa, Deosque precetur et oret,
Ut redeat miseris, abeat fortuna superbis.
Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 195.

"Let the chorus, like the player, support a character "and let it act a manly part. Let it favour the good, "and give friendly counsel, and restrain the angry, and "love to compose the swellings of passion. Let it cele- "brate the praises of temperance, of salutary justice, of "law, and of peace with open gates: let it be faithful "to its trust, and supplicate the gods, and pray, that "fortune may return to the afflicted, and forsake the "haughty."

reconcileable, not only to probability, but to real matter of fact. The dramatick poets of Greece rightly judged, that great persons, like those who appear in tragedy, engaged in any great action, are never without attendants or spectators, or those at least who observe their conduct, and make remarks upon it. And therefore, together with the persons principally concerned, they always introduced attendants or spectators on the stage, who, by the mouth of one of their number, joined occasionally in the dialogue, and were called the chorus. That this artifice, though perhaps it might not suit the modern drama, had a happy effect in beautifying the poetry, illustrating the morality, and heightening the probability, of the ancient, is a point, which in my opinion admits of sufficient proof, and has in fact been fully proved by Mr. Mason, in his *letters*, and admirably exemplified in his *Elfrida* and *Caractacus;* two poems that do honour to the English tongue, and to modern genius. But I do not now enter into any controversy on the subject: I speak of it with a view only to observe, that the propriety of the character assigned to the chorus is founded on that moral propensity above mentioned. For to introduce a company of unprejudiced persons, even of the vulgar, witnessing a great event, and yet not pitying the unfortunate, nor exclaiming

against tyranny and injustice, nor rejoicing when the good are successful, nor wishing well to the worthy, would be to feign what seldom or never happens in real life; and what, therefore, in the improved state of things that poetry imitates, must never be supposed to happen. Sentiments that betray a hard heart, a depraved understanding, unwarrantable pride, or any other moral or intellectual perversity, never fail to give offence, except where they appear to be introduced as examples for our improvement. Poetry, therefore, that is uninstructive, or immoral, cannot please those who retain any moral sensibility, or uprightness of judgment; and must consequently displease the greater part of any regular society of rational creatures. Great wickedness and great genius may have been united in the same person; but it may be doubted, whether corruption of heart and delicacy of taste be at all compatible.

Whenever a writer forgets himself so far as to give us ground to suspect him even of momentary impiety or hardheartedness, we charge him in the same breath with want of conscience and want of taste; the former being generally, as well as justly, supposed to comprehend the latter. Cowley was an excellent person, and a very witty poet: but where is the man who would not be

ashamed to acknowledge himself pleased with that clause in the following quotation which implies, that the author, puffed up with an idle conceit of the importance of literary renown, was disposed for a moment to look down with equal contempt upon the brutes and the common people!

> What shall I do, to be for ever known,
> And make the age to come my own?
> I shall like beasts or common people die,
> Unless you write my elegy. *

Virgil, describing a plague among the beasts, gives the following picture, which has every excellence that can belong to descriptive poetry; and of which Scaliger, with a noble enthusiasm, declares, that he would rather be the author, than first favourite to Cyrus or Crœsus:

* The learned and amiable Dr. Hurd has omitted these two lines in his late edition of Cowley's poems. I wish some editor of Dryden would expunge the last part of the following sentence, which as it now stands, is a reproach to humanity. "One is for raking in Chaucer for antiquated words, which are never to be revived, but when sound or significancy is wanting in the present language: but many of his deserve not this redemption, any more than the crowds of men who daily die or are slain for sixpence in a battle, merit to be restored to life, if a wish could revive them."

Postcript to Virgil.

Ecce autem duro fumans sub vomere taurus
Concidit, et mixtum spumis vomit ore cruorem,
Extremosque ciet gemitus. It tristis arator,
Mœrentem abjungens fraterna morte juvencum,
Atque opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra.

Which Dryden thus renders:

The steer, who to the yoke was bred to bow,
(Studious of tillage, and the crooked plough),
Falls down and dies; and, dying, spews a flood
Of foamy madness mixed with clotted blood.
The clown, *who cursing Providence repines*,
His mournful fellow from the team disjoins;
With many a groan forsakes his fruitless care,
And in th' unfinished furrow leaves the share.

Not to insist upon the misrepresentation of Virgil's meaning in the first couplet, I would only appeal to the reader, whether, by debasing the charming simplicity of *It tristis arator* with his blasphemous paraphrase, Dryden has not destroyed the beauty of the passage.* Such is the

* Examples of bad writing might no doubt be produced, on almost any occasion, from Quarles and Blackmore; but as nobody reads their works, nobody is liable to be misled by them. It would seem therefore, more expedient to take such examples from authors of merit, whose beauties too often give a sanction to their blemishes. For this reason it is, that I have, both here and in other places, taken the liberty to speak of Dryden

opposition between good poetry and bad morality! So true it is, that the bard who would captivate the heart must sing in unison to the voice of conscience! and that *instruction* (taking the word

with disapprobation. But as I would not be thought insensible to the merit of an author, to whom every lover of English poetry is deeply indebted, I beg leave, once for all, to deliver at large my opinion of that great genius.

There is no modern writer, whose style is more distinguishable. Energy and ease are its chief characters. The former is owing to a happy choice of expression, equally emphatical and plain: the latter to a laudable partiality in favour of the idioms and radical words of the English tongue; the *native* riches and *peculiar* genius whereof are perhaps more apparent in him, than in any of our poets. In Dryden's more correct pieces, we meet with no affectation of words of Greek or Latin etymology, no cumbersome pomp of epithets, no drawling circumlocutions, no idle glare of images, no blunderings round about a meaning: his English is pure and simple, nervous and clear, to a degree which Pope has never exceeded, and not always equalled. Yet, as I have elsewhere remarked, his attachment to the vernacular idiom, as well as the fashion of his age, often betrays him into a vulgarity, and even meanness, of expression, which is particularly observable in his translations of Virgil and Homer, and in those parts of his writings where he aims at pathos or sublimity. In fact, Dryden's genius did not lead him to the sublime or pathetick. Good strokes of both may doubtless be found in him; but they are momentary, and seem to be accidental.

in no unwarrantable latitude) is one of the means that must be employed to render poetry agreeable.

For by instruction I do not here understand

He is too witty for the one, and too familiar for the other. That he had no adequate relish for the majesty of Paradise Lost, is evident to those who have compared his opera called *The State of Innocence* with that immortal poem; and that his taste for the true pathetick was imperfect, too manifestly appears from the general tenour of his translations, as well as tragedies. His Virgil abounds in lines and couplets of the most perfect beauty; but these are mixed with others of a different stamp: nor can they who judge of the original by this translation, ever receive any tolerable idea of that uniform magnificence of sound and language, that exquisite choice of words and figures, and that sweet pathos of expression and of sentiment which characterise the Mantuan poet. In delineating the more familiar scenes of life, in clothing plain moral doctrines with ease and graceful versification, in the various departments of comick satire, and in the spirit and melody of his lyrick poems, Dryden is inferiour to none of those who went before him. He exceeds his master Chaucer in the first: in the three last he rivals Horace; the style of whose epistles he has happily imitated in his *Religio Laici*, and other didactick pieces; and the harmony and elegance of whose odes he has proved that he could have equalled, if he had thought proper to cultivate that branch of the poetick art. Indeed, whether we consider his peculiar significancy of expression, or the purity of his style; the sweet-

merely the communication of moral and physical truth. Whatever tends to raise those human affections that are favourable to truth and virtue, or to repress the opposite passions, will always

ness of his lyrick, or the ease and perspicuity of his moral poems; the sportive severity of his satire, or his talents in wit and humour; Dryden, in point of *genius*, (I do not say *taste*), seems to bear a closer affinity to Horace, than to any other ancient or modern author. For energy of words, vivacity of description, and apposite variety of numbers, his *Feast of Alexander* is superiour to any ode of Horace or Pindar now extant.

Dryden's verse, though often faulty, has a grace, and a spirit, peculiar to itself. That of Pope is more correct, and perhaps upon the whole more harmonious; but it is in general more languid, and less diversified. Pope's numbers are sweet but elaborate; and our sense of their energy is in some degree interrupted by our attention to the art displayed in their contexture: Dryden's are natural and free; and while they communicate their own sprightly motion to the spirits of the reader, hurry him along with a gentle and pleasing violence, without giving him time either to animadvert on their faults, or to analyse their beauties. Pope excels in solemnity of sound; Dryden, in an easy melody, and boundless variety of rhythm. In this last respect I think I could prove, that he is superiour to all other English poets, Milton himself not excepted. Till Dryden appeared, none of our writers in rhyme of the last century approached in any measure to the harmony of Fairfax and Spencer. Of Waller it can only be said, that he is

gratify and improve our moral and intellectual powers, and may properly enough be called *instructive*. All poetry, therefore, is entitled to this epithet, not only which imparts knowledge we

not harsh; of Denham and Cowley, if a few couplets were struck out of their works, we could not say so much. But in Dryden's hands, the English rhyming couplet assumed a new form; and seems hardly susceptible of any further improvement. One of the greatest poets of this century, the late and much lamented Mr. Gray of Cambridge, modestly declared to me, that if there was in his own numbers any thing that deserved approbation, he had learned it all from Dryden.

Criticks have often stated a comparison between Dryden and Pope, as poets of the same order, and who differed only in *degree* of merit. But, in my opinion, the merit of the one differs considerably in *kind* from that of the other. Both were happy in a sound judgment and most comprehensive mind. Wit, and humour, and learning too, they seem to have possessed in equal measure; or, if Dryden may be thought to have gone deeper in the sciences, Pope must be allowed to have been the greater adept in the arts. The diversities in point of correctness and delicacy, which arose from their different ways of life, I do not now insist upon. But, setting those aside, if Dryden founds any claim of preference on the originality of his manner, we shall venture to affirm, that Pope may found a similar claim, and with equal justice, on the perfection of his taste; and that, if the critical writings of the first are more voluminous, those

had not before; but also which awakens our pity for the sufferings of our fellow creatures; promotes a taste for the beauties of nature animated or inanimate; makes vice appear the object of

of the second are more judicious; if Dryden's inventions are more diversified, those of Pope are more regular, and more important. Pope's style may be thought to have less simplicity, less vivacity, and less of the purity of the mother tongue; but is at the same time, more uniformly elevated, and less debased by vulgarism, than that of his great master: and the superiour variety that animates the numbers of the latter, will perhaps be found to be compensated by the steadier and more majestick modulation of the former. Thus far their merits would appear to be pretty equally balanced. But if the opinion of those criticks be true, who hold that the highest regions of Parnassus are appropriated to pathos and sublimity, Dryden must after all confess, that he has never ascended so far as his illustrious imitator: there being nothing in the writings of the first so deeply pathetick as the *Epistle of Eloisa*, or the *Elegy on the Unfortunate Lady;* nor so uniformly sublime as the *Essay on Man*, or the *Pastoral of the Messiah*. This last is indeed but a selection and imitation of choice passages; but it bespeaks a power of imitation, and a taste in selection, that Dryden does not seem to have possessed. To all which may I not be permitted to add, what I think I could prove, that the pathos of Homer is frequently improved by Pope, and that of Virgil very frequently debased by Dryden?

The writings of Dryden are stamped with originality,

indignation or ridicule; inculcates a sense of our dependence upon heaven; fortifies our minds against the evils of life; or promotes the love of virtue and wisdom, either by delineating their native charms, or by setting before us in suitable

but are not always the better for that circumstance. Pope is an imitator professedly, and of choice; but to most of those whom he copies he is at least equal, and to many of them superiour: and it is pleasing to observe, how he rises in proportion to his originals. Where he follows Denham, Buckingham, Roscommon, and Rochester, in his Windsor-forest, Essay on Criticism, and Poem on Silence, he is superiour indeed, but does not soar very high above them. When he versifies Chaucer, he catches, as by instinct, the ease, simplicity, and spirit of Dryden, whom he there emulates. In the Rape of the Lock he outshines Boileau, as much as the sylphs that flutter round Belinda exceed in sprightliness and luminous beauty those mechanical attendants of the goddess of luxury, who knead up plumpness for the chin of the canon, and pound vermilion for the cheek of the monk.* His Eloisa is beyond all comparison more sublime and more interesting than any of Ovid's letter-writing ladies. His imitations of Horace equal their archetypes in elegance, and often surpass them in energy and fire. In the lyrick style, he was no match for Dryden: but when he copies the manner of Virgil, and borrows the thoughts of Isaiah, Pope is superiour not only to himself, but to almost all other poets.

* See Rape of the Lock, canto 2. vers. 55. and Lutrin, chant. 2. verse. 100.

colours the dreadful consequences of imprudent and immoral conduct. There are few good poems of length, that will not be found in one or more, or perhaps in several of these respects, to promote the instruction of a reader of taste. Even the poem of Lucretius, notwithstanding its absurd philosophy, (which, when the author gives way to it, divests him for a time of the poetical, and even of the rational, character,) abounds in sentiments of great beauty and high importance; and in such delightful pictures of nature, as must inflame the enthusiasm wherewith a well informed mind contemplates the wonders and glories of creation. Who can attend to the execrable designs of Iago, to Macbeth's progress through the several stages of guilt and misery, to the ruin that overtakes the impious and tyrannical Mezentius, to the thoughts and machinations of Satan and his angels in Paradise Lost, without paying a fresh tribute of praise to virtue, and renewing his resolutions to persevere in the paths of innocence and peace! Nay the machinery of Homer's deities, which in many parts I abandon as indefensible, will, if I mistake not, generally appear, wherever it is reasonably pleasing, to have somewhat of an useful tendency. I speak not now of the importance of machinery as an instrument

of the sublime and of the marvellous, necessary to every epick poem; but of Homer's use of it in those passages where it is supposed by some to be unnecessary. And in these, it often serves to set off a simple fact with allegorical decoration, and, of course, by interesting us more in the fable, to impress upon us more effectually the instruction conveyed in it. And sometimes it is to be considered as nothing more than a personification of the attributes of the divinity, or the operations of the human soul. And, in general, it teaches emphatically this important lesson, that Providence ever superintends the affairs of men; that injustice and impiety are peculiarly obnoxious to divine vengeance; and that a proper attention to religious and moral duty, never fails to recommend both nations and individuals to the divine favour.

But if instruction may be drawn from the speeches and behaviour of Milton's devils, of Shakspeare's Macbeth, and of Virgil's Mezentius, why is Cowley blamed for a phrase, which at worst implies only a slight sally of momentary pride? I answer, that to speak seriously the language of intemperate passion, is one thing; to imitate or describe it another. By the former, one can never merit praise or esteem; by the latter one may merit much praise, and do much good.

In the one case, we recommend intemperate passions by our example; in the other, we may render them odious, by displaying their absurdity and consequences. To the greater part of his readers an author cannot convey either pleasure or instruction, by delivering sentiments as his own, which contradict the general conscience of mankind.

Well; but Dryden, in the passage lately quoted and censured, does not deliver his own sentiments, but only describes those of another: why then should he be blamed for making the unfortunate ploughman irreligious? Why? Because he misrepresents his author's meaning; and (which is worse) counteracts his design. The design of the Latin poet was, not to expatiate on the punishment due to blasphemy or atheism, but to raise pity, by describing the melancholy effects of a plague so fatal to the brute creation: a theme very improperly introduced in the conclusion of a poem on the art of rearing and preserving cattle. Now, had Virgil said, as Dryden has done, that the farmer who lost his work-beast was a blasphemer, we should not have pitied him at all. But Virgil says only, that "the "sorrowful husbandman went and unyoked the "surviving bullock, and left his plough fixed in "the middle of the unfinished furrow;" and by

this pregnant and picturesque brevity, affects us a thousand times more, than he could have done by recapitulating all the sentiments of the poor farmer in the form of a soliloquy: as indeed the view of the scene, as Virgil has drawn it, with the emphatick silence of the sufferer, would have been incomparably more moving, than a long speech from the ploughman, fraught with moral reflections on death, and disappointment, and the uncertainty of human things. For to a poem mere morality is not so essential as accurate description; which, however, in matters of importance, must have a moral tendency, otherwise the human affections will take part against it.

But what do you say to the tragedy of *Venice Preserved*, in which our pity and other benevolent emotions are engaged in behalf of those whom the moral faculty disapproves? Is not the poetry, for this very reason, immoral? And yet, is it not pathetick and pleasing? How then can you say, that something of a moral or instructive tendency is necessary to make a poem agreeable? In answer to this, let it be observed, first, That it is natural for us to sympathize with those who suffer, even when justly; which, however, implies not any liking to their crimes, or that our moral sentiments are at all perverted, but which on the contrary, by quickening our sense

of the misery consequent upon guilt, may be useful in confirming good principles, and improving the moral sensibility of the mind: secondly, That the most pleasing and most pathetick parts of the play in question are those which relate to an amiable lady, with whose distress, as well as with her husband's on her account, we rationally sympathize, because that arises from their mutual affection: thirdly, That the conspirators give a plausible colour to their cause, and exert a greatness of mind, which takes off our attention from their crimes, and leaves room for the tender emotions to operate occasionally in their favour: and fourthly, That the merit of this play, like that of *the Orphan*, lies rather in the beauty of particular passages, than in the general effect of the whole; and that, if in any part the author has endeavoured to interest our kind affections in opposition to conscience, his poetry will there be found to be equally unpleasing and uninstructive.

But may not agreeable affections arise in the mind, which partake neither of vice nor of virtue; such as joy, and hope, and those emotions that accompany the contemplation of external beauty, or magnificence? And, if pastorals and songs, and anacreontick odes, awaken these agreeable affections, may not such poems be

pleasing, without being instructive? This may be, no doubt. And for this reason, among others, I take instruction to be only a secondary end of poetry. But it is only by short poems, as songs and pastorals, that these agreeable affections indifferent alike to vice and virtue, are excited, without any mixture of others. For moral sentiments are so prevalent in the human mind, that no affection can long subsist there, without intermingling with them, and being assimilated to their nature. Nor can a piece of real and pleasing poetry be extended to any great length, without operating, directly or indirectly, either on those affections that are friendly to virtue, or on those sympathies that quicken our moral sensibility, and prepare us for virtuous impressions. In fact, man's true happiness is derived from the moral part of his constitution; and therefore we cannot suppose, that any thing which affects not his moral part, should be lastingly and generally agreeable. We sympathize with the pleasure one takes in a feast, where there is friendship, and an interchange of good offices; but not with the satisfaction an epicure finds in devouring a solitary banquet. A short anacreontick we may relish for its melody and sparkling images; but a long poem, in order to be pleasing,

must not only charm the ear and the fancy, but also touch the heart and exercise the conscience.

Still perhaps it may be objected to these reasonings, that Horace, in a well known verse,* declares the end of poetry to be twofold, to please, or to instruct; whereas we maintain, that the ultimate end of this art is to please; instruction being only one of the means (and not always a necessary one) by which that ultimate end is to be accomplished. This interpretation of Horace has indeed been admitted by some modern criticks: but it is erroneous; for the passage, rightly understood, will not appear to contain any thing inconsistent with the present doctrine. The author is there stating a comparison between the Greek and Roman writers, with a view to the poetry of the stage; and after commending the former for their correctness, and for the liberal spirit wherewith they conducted their literary labours, and blaming his countrymen for their inaccuracy and avarice, he proceeds thus: "The ends proposed by our dramatick "poets (or by poets in general) are, to please, to "instruct, or to do both. When instruction is your "aim, let your moral sentences be expressed "with brevity, that they may be readily under-

* Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetæ.

" stood, and long remembered: where you mean " to please, let your fictions be conformable to " truth, or probability. The elder part of your " audience (or readers) have no relish for poems " that give pleasure only without instruction; " nor the younger for such writings as give in- " struction without pleasure. He only can secure " the universal suffrage in his favour, who " blends the useful with the agreeable, and de- " lights at the same time that he instructs the " reader. Such are the works that bring money " to the bookseller, that pass into foreign coun- " tries, and perpetuate the author's name through " a long succession of ages."* Now what is the meaning of all this? What, but that to the *perfection* of dramatick poetry (or, if you please of poetry in general) both sound morals and beautiful fiction are requisite. But Horace never meant to say, that instruction as well as pleasure, is necessary to give to any composition the *poetical character:* or he would not in another place have celebrated, with so much affection and rapture, the melting strains of Sappho, and the playful genius of Anacreon;† two authors transcendently sweet, but not remarkably instructive. We are sure, that pathos, and harmony, and elevated

* Hor. Ar. Poet. 333—347.

† Hor. Carm. lib. 4. ode 9.

language, were, in Horace's opinion, essential to poetry;* and of these decorations no body will affirm, that instruction is the end, who considers that the most instructive books in the world are written in plain prose.

Let this therefore be established as a truth in criticism, That the end of poetry is to please. Verses, if pleasing, may be poetical, though they convey little or no instruction; but verses, whose sole merit is, that they convey instruction, are not poetical. Instruction, however, especially in poems of length, is necessary to their *perfection*, because they would not be *perfectly agreeable* without it.

* Hor. Sat. lib. 1. sat. 4. verse 40.

CHAPTER II.

Of the Standard of Poetical Invention.

HOMER'S beautiful description of the heavens and earth, as they appear in a calm evening by the light of the moon and stars, concludes with this circumstance, "And the heart "of the shepherd is glad."* Madame Dacier, from the turn she gives to the passage in her version, seems to think, and Pope in order perhaps to make out his couplet, insinuates, that the gladness of the shepherd is owing to his sense of the utility of those luminaries. And this may in part be the case: but this is not in Homer; nor is it a necessary consideration. It is true that, in contemplating the material universe, they who discern the causes and effects of things must be more rapturously entertained, than those who perceive nothing but shape and size, colour and motion. Yet, in the mere outside of nature's works, (if I may so express myself,) there is a splendour and magnificence to which

* Iliad, b. 8. vers. 555.

even untutored minds cannot attend, without great delight.

Not that all peasants, or all philosophers, are equally susceptible of those charming impressions. It is strange to observe the callousness of some men, before whom all the glories of heaven and earth pass in daily succession, without touching their hearts, elevating their fancy, or leaving any durable remembrance. Even of those who pretend to sensibility, how many are there to whom the lustre of the rising or setting sun; the sparkling concave of the midnight sky; the mountain forest tossing and roaring to the storm, or warbling with all the melodies of a summer evening; the sweet interchange of hill and dale, shade and sunshine, grove, lawn, and water, which an extensive landscape offers to view; the scenery of the ocean, so lovely, so majestick, and so tremendous, and the many pleasing varieties of the animal and vegetable kingdom, could never afford so much real satisfaction, as the steams and noise of a ballroom, the insipid fiddling and squeaking of an opera, or the vexations and wranglings of a cardtable!

But some minds there are of a different make; who, even in the early part of life, receive from the contemplation of nature a species of delight which they would hardly exchange for any other:

and who, as avarice and ambition are not the infirmities of that period, would, with equal sincerity and rapture, exclaim,

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny;
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shows her brightening face;
You cannot bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns by living stream at eve.*

Such minds have always in them the seeds of true taste, and frequently of imitative genius. At least, though their enthusiastick or visionary turn of mind (as the man of the world would call it) should not always incline them to practise poetry or painting, we need not scruple to affirm, that without some portion of this enthusiasm, no person ever became a true poet or painter. For he who would imitate the works of nature, must first accurately observe them; and accurate observation is to be expected from those only who take great pleasure in it.

To a mind thus disposed no part of creation is indifferent. In the crowded city, and howling wilderness; in the cultivated province, and solitary isle; in the flowery lawn, and craggy mountain; in the murmur of the rivulet, and in the uproar

* Castle of Indolence.

of the ocean; in the radiance of summer, and gloom of winter; in the thunder of heaven, and in the whisper of the breeze; he still finds something to rouse or to soothe his imagination, to draw forth his affections or to employ his understanding. And from every mental energy that is not attended with pain, and even from some of those that are, as moderate terrour and pity, a sound mind derives satisfaction; exercise being equally necessary to the body and the soul, and to both equally productive of health and pleasure.

This happy sensibility to the beauties of nature should be cherished in young persons. It engages them to contemplate the Creator in his wonderful works; it purifies and harmonizes the soul, and prepares it for moral and intellectual discipline; it supplies an endless source of amusement; it contributes even to bodily health; and as a strict analogy subsists between material and moral beauty, it leads the heart by an easy transition from the one to the other; and thus recommends virtue for its transcendent loveliness, and makes vice appear the object of contempt and abomination. An intimate acquaintance with the best descriptive poets, Spenser, Milton, and Thomson, but above all with the divine Georgick, joined to some practice in the art of drawing, will promote this amiable sensibility in early

years; for then the face of nature has novelty superadded to its other charms, the passions are not preengaged, the heart is free from care, and the imagination warm and romantick.

But, not to insist longer on those ardent emotions that are peculiar to the enthusiastick disciple of nature, may it not be affirmed of all men, without exception, or at least of all the enlightened part of mankind, that they are gratified by the contemplation of things natural, as opposed to unnatural? Monstrous sights please but for a moment, if they please at all; for they derive their charm from the beholder's amazement, which is quickly over. I have read indeed of a man of rank in Sicily,* who chooses to adorn his villa with pictures and statues of most unnatural deformity; but it is a singular instance; and one would not be much more surprised to hear of a person living without food, or growing fat by the use of poison. To say of any thing, that it is *contrary to nature*, denotes censure and disgust on the part of the speaker; as the epithet *natural* intimates an agreeable quality, and seems for the most part to imply, that a thing is as it ought to be, suitable to our own taste, and congenial with our own constitution. Think, with what sentiments

* See Mr. Brydone's Tour in Sicily, letter 24.

we should peruse a poem, in which nature was totally misrepresented, and principles of thought and of operation supposed to take place, repugnant to every thing we have seen or heard of: in which, for example, avarice and coldness were ascribed to youth, and prodigality and passionate attachment to the old; in which men were made to act at random, sometimes according to character, and sometimes contrary to it; in which cruelty and envy were productive of love, and beneficence and kind affection of hatred; in which beauty was invariably the object of dislike, and ugliness of desire; in which society was rendered happy by atheism, and the promiscuous perpetration of crimes, and justice and fortitude were held in universal contempt. Or think, how we should relish a painting, where no regard was had to the proportions, colours, or any of the physical laws of nature: where the ears and eyes of animals were placed in their shoulders; where the sky was green, and the grass crimson; where trees grew with their branches in earth, and their roots in the air; where men were seen fighting after their heads were cut off, ships sailing on the land, lions entangled in cobwebs, sheep preying on dead carcasses, fishes sporting in the woods, and elephants walking on the sea. Could such figures and combinations give pleasure, or merit the appellation of sublime or beautiful? Should

we hesitate to pronounce their author mad? And are the absurdities of madmen proper subjects either of amusement or of imitation to reasonable beings?

Let it be remarked too, that though we distinguish our internal powers by different names, because otherwise we could not speak of them so as to be understood, they are all but so many energies of the same individual mind; and therefore it is not to be supposed, that what contradicts any one leading faculty should yield permanent delight to the rest. That cannot be agreeable to reason, which conscience disapproves; nor can that gratify imagination, which is repugnant to reason. Besides, belief and acquiescence of mind are pleasant, as distrust and disbelief are painful; and therefore, that only can give solid and general satisfaction, which has something of plausibility in it; something which we conceive it possible for a rational being to believe. But no rational being can acquiesce in what is obviously contrary to nature, or implies palpable absurdity.

Poetry, therefore, and indeed every art whose end is to please, must be natural; and if so, must exhibit real matter of fact, or something like it; that is, in other words, must be, either according to truth, or according to verisimilitude.

And though every part of the material universe

abounds in objects of pleasurable contemplation, yet nothing in nature so powerfully touches our hearts, or gives so great variety of exercise to our moral and intellectual faculties, as man. Human affairs and human feelings are universally interesting. There are many who have no great relish for the poetry that delineates only irrational or inanimate beings; but to that which exhibits the fortunes, the characters, and the conduct of men, there is hardly any person who does not listen with sympathy and delight. And hence, to imitate human action, is considered by Aristotle as essential to this art; and must be allowed to be essential to the most pleasing and most instructive part of it, I mean to epick and dramatick composition. Mere descriptions, however beautiful, and moral reflections, however just, become tiresome where our passions are not occasionally awakened by some event that concerns our fellow men. Do not all readers of taste receive peculiar pleasure from those little tales or episodes, with which Thomson's descriptive poem on the seasons is here and there enlivened? and are they not sensible, that the thunder storm would not have been half so interesting without the tale of the two lovers; * nor the harvest scene, without

* Summer, vers. 1171.

that of Palemon and Lavinia; † nor the driving snows, without that exquisite picture of a man perishing among them? ‡ It is much to be regretted that Young did not employ the same artifice to animate his Night Thoughts. Sentiments and descriptions may be regarded as the pilasters, carvings, gildings, and other decorations of the poetical fabrick; but human actions are the columns and the rafters, that give it stability and elevation. Or, changing the metaphor, we may consider these as the soul which informs the lovely frame; while these are little more than the ornaments of the body.

Whether the pleasure we take in things natural, and our dislike to what is the reverse, be the effect of habit or of constitution, is not a material inquiry. There is nothing absurd in supposing, that between the soul, in its first formation, and the rest of nature, a mutual harmony and sympathy may have been established, which experience may indeed confirm, but no perverse habits could entirely subdue. As no sort of education could make man believe the contrary of a self-evident axiom, or reconcile him to a life of perfect solitude; so I should imagine, that our love

† Autumn, vers. 177. ‡ Winter, vers. 276.

of nature and regularity might still remain with us in some degree, though we had been born and bred in the Sicilian villa above mentioned, and never heard any thing applauded but what deserved censure, nor censure but what merited applause. Yet habit must be allowed to have a powerful influence over the sentiments and feelings of mankind. Objects to which we have been long accustomed, we are apt to contract a fondness for; we conceive them readily, and contemplate them with pleasure; nor do we quit our old tracts of speculation or practice, without reluctance and pain. Hence in part arises our attachment to our own professions, our old acquaintance, our native soil, our homes, and to the very hills, streams, and rocks in our neighbourhood. It would therefore be strange, if man, accustomed as he is from his earliest days to the regularity of nature, did not contract a liking to her productions, and principles of operation.

Yet we neither expect nor desire, that every human invention, where the end is only to please, should be an exact transcript of real existence. It is enough, that the mind acquiesce in it as probable, or plausible, or such as we think might happen without any direct opposition to the laws of nature: or, to speak more accurately, it is enough, that it be consistent, either, first, with

general experience; or, secondly, with popular opinion; or, thirdly, that it be consistent with itself, and connected with probable circumstances.

First: If a human invention be consistent with *general* experience, we acquiesce in it as sufficiently probable. *Particular* experiences, however, there may be, so uncommon and so little expected, that we should not admit their probability, if we did not know them to be true. No man of sense believes, that he has any likelihood of being enriched by the discovery of hidden treasure; or thinks it probable, on purchasing a lottery ticket, that he shall gain the first prize: and yet great wealth has actually been acquired by such good fortune. But we should look upon these as poor expedients in a play or romance for bringing about a happy catastrophe. We expect that fiction should be more consonant to the *general* tenour of human affairs; in a word, that not possibility but probability, should be the standard of poetical invention.

Secondly: Fiction is admitted as conformable to this standard, when it accords with received opinions. These may be erroneous, but are not often *apparently* repugnant to nature. On this account, and because they are familiar to us from our infancy, the mind readily acquiesces in them,

or at least yields them that degree of credit which is necessary to render them pleasing. Hence the fairies, ghosts and witches of Shakspeare are admitted as probable beings; and angels obtain a place in religious pictures, though we know that they do not now appear in the scenery of real life. Even when a popular opinion has long been exploded, and has become repugnant to universal belief, the fictions built upon it are still admitted as natural, because they were accounted such by the people to whom they were first addressed; whose sentiments and views of things we are willing to adopt, when by the power of pleasing description, we are introduced into their scenes, and made acquainted with their manners. Hence we admit the theology of the ancient poets, their Elysium and Tartarus, Scylla and Charybdis, Cyclops and Circe, and the rest of those "beautiful wonders" (as Horace calls them) which were believed in the heroick ages; as well as the demons and enchantments of Tasso, which may be supposed to have obtained no small degree of credit among the Italians of the sixteenth century, and are suitable enough to the notions that prevailed universally in Europe not long before. * In fact when Poetry is in

* In the fourteenth century, the common people of Italy believed, that the poet Dante actually went down to hell; that the *Inferno* was a true account of what he

other respects true; when it gives an accurate display of those parts of nature about which we know that men in all ages must have entertained the same opinion, I mean those appearances in the visible creation, and those feelings and workings of the human mind, which are obvious to all mankind; when poetry, I say, is thus far according to nature, we are very willing to be indulgent to what is fictitious in it, and to grant a temporary allowance to any system of fable which the author pleases to adopt; provided that he lay the scene in a distant country, or fix the date to a remote period. This is no unreasonable piece of complaisance: we owe it both to the poet and to ourselves; for without it we should neither form a right estimate of his genius, nor receive from his works that pleasure which they were intend-

saw there; and that his sallow complexion, and stunted beard, (which seemed by its growth and colour to have been too near the fire), were the consequence of his passing so much of his time in that hot and smoky region. *See Vicende della literatura del dig. C. Denina, cap.* 4. Sir John Mandeville's Book of Travels, written not long after, was not only ratified by the Pope, after having been compared with the *Map a Mundi* of that time, but, what is more strange, seems to have been seriously believed by that adventurous knight himself, though a man of considerable learning, and no despicable taste. *See Conclusion of the Book.*

ed to impart. Let him, however, take care, that his system of fable be such, as his countrymen and contemporaries (to whom his work is immediately addressed) might be supposed capable of yielding their assent to; for otherwise we should not believe him to be in earnest: and let him connect it as much as he can with probable circumstances, and make it appear in a series of events consistent with itself.

For (thirdly) if this be the case, we shall admit his story as probable, or at least as natural, and consequently be interested in it, even though it be not warranted by general experience, and derive but slender authority from popular opinion. Calyban, in the Tempest, would have shocked the mind as an improbability, if we had not been made acquainted with his origin, and seen his character displayed in a series of consistent behaviour. But when we are told, that he sprung from a witch and a demon, a connexion not contrary to the laws of nature, as they were understood in Shakspeare's time, and find his manners conformable to his descent, we are really reconciled to the fiction. In the same sense, the lilliputians of Swift may pass for probable beings; not so much because we know that a belief in pygmies was once current in the world, (for the true ancient pygmy was at least thrice as tall

as those whom Gulliver visited), but because we find, that every circumstance relating to them accords with itself, and with their supposed character. It is not the size of the people only that is diminutive; their country, seas, ships, and towns, are all in exact proportion; their theological and political principles, their passions, manners, customs, and all the parts of their conduct, betray a levity and littleness perfectly suitable: and so simple is the whole narration, and apparently so artless and sincere, that I should not much wonder, if it had imposed (as I have been told it has) upon some persons of no contemptible understanding. The same degree of credit may perhaps for the same reasons be due to his giants. But when he grounds his narrative upon a contradiction to nature; when he presents us with rational brutes, and irrational men; when he tells us of horses building houses for habitations, milking cows for food, riding in carriages, and holding conversations on the laws and politicks of Europe; not all his genius (and there he exerts it to the utmost) is able to reconcile us to so monstrous a fiction; we may smile at some of his absurd exaggerations; we may be pleased with the energy of style, and accuracy of description, in particular places; and a malevolent heart may triumph in the satire: but we can never relish it as a fa-

ble, because it is at once unnatural and self-contradictory. Swift's judgment seems to have forsaken him on this occasion:* he wallows in nas-

* There are improprieties in this narrative, which one would think a very slight attention to nature would have prevented; and which, without heightening the satire, serve only to aggravate the absurdity of the fable. *Houyhnhnms* are horses in perfection, with the addition of reason and virtue. Whatever, therefore, takes away from their perfection as horses, without adding to their rational and moral accomplishments, must be repugnant to the author's design, and ought not to have found a place in his narration. Yet he makes his beloved quadrupeds *dwell in houses* of their own building, and use *warm food* and the *milk of cows* as a delicacy: though these luxuries, supposed attainable by a nation of horses, could contribute no more to their perfection, than brandy and imprisonment would to that of a man. Again, did Swift believe, that religious ideas are natural to a reasonable being, and necessary to the happiness of a moral one? I hope he did. Yet has he represented his *houyhnhnms*, as patterns of moral virtue, as the greatest masters of reason, and withal as completely happy, without any religious ideas, or any views beyond the present life. In a word, he would make stupidity consistent with mental excellence, and unnatural appetites with animal perfection. These, however, are small matters, compared with the other absurdities of this abominable tale. But when a christian divine can set himself deliberately to trample upon that nature, which he knows to have been made but a little lower

tiness and brutality; and the general run of his satire is downright defamation. Lucian's *True* History is a heap of extravagancies put together without order or unity, or any other apparent design, than to ridicule the language and manner of grave authors. His ravings, which have no better right to the name of fable, than a hill of rubbish has to that of palace, are destitute of every colour of plausibility. Animal trees, ships sailing in the sky, armies of monstrous things travelling between the sun and moon on a pavement of cobwebs, rival nations of men inhabiting woods and mountains in a whale's belly, are liker the dreams of a bedlamite, than the invention of a rational being.

If we were to prosecute this subject any further, it would be proper to remark, that in some kinds of poetical invention a stricter probability is required than in others: that, for instance, comedy, whether dramatick or narrative,* must

than the angels, and to have been assumed by one far more exalted than they; we need not be surprised if the same perverse habits of thinking which harden his heart, should also debase his judgment.

* Fielding's *Tom Jones*, *Amelia* and *Joseph Andrews*, are examples of what I call the epick or narrative comedy: perhaps *the comick epopee* is a more proper term.

seldom deviate from the ordinary course of human affairs, because it exhibits the manners of real, and even of familiar life; that the tragick poet, because he imitates characters more exalted, and generally refers to events little known, or long since past, may be allowed a wider range; but must never attempt the marvellous fictions of the epick muse, because he addresses his work, not only to the passions and imagination of mankind, but also to their eyes and ears, which are not easily imposed upon, and refuse to be gratified with any representation that does not come very near the truth; that the epick poem may claim still ampler privileges, because its fictions, are not subject to the scrutiny of any outward sense, and because it conveys information in regard both to the highest human characters, and the most important and wonderful events, and also to the affairs of unseen worlds, and superiour beings. Nor would it be improper to observe, that the several species of comick, of tragick, of epick, composition, are not confined to the same degree of probability; for that farce may be allowed to be less probable than the regular comedy; the masque, than the regular tragedy; and the mixed epick, such as the Fairy Queen and Orlando Furioso, than the pure epopee of Homer, Virgil, and Milton. But this part of the subject seems not

to require further illustration. Enough has been said, to show, that nothing unnatural can please; and therefore poetry, whose end is to please, must be ACCORDING TO NATURE.

And if so, it must be, either according to real nature, or according to nature somewhat different from the reality.

CHAPTER III.

Poetry exhibits a System of Nature somewhat different from the Reality of Things.

TO exhibit *real nature* is the business of the historian; who, if he were strictly to confine himself to his own sphere, would never record even the minutest circumstance of any speech, event, or description, which was not warranted by sufficient authority. It has been the language of criticks in every age, that the historian ought to relate nothing as true which is false or dubious, and to conceal nothing material which he knows to be true. But I doubt whether any writer of profane history has ever been so scrupulous. Thucydides himself, who began his history when that war began which he records, and who set down every event soon after it happened, according to the most authentick information, seems however to have indulged his fancy not a little in his harangues and descriptions, particularly that of the plague of Athens; and the same thing has been practised, with greater latitude, by Livy and Tacitus, and more or less by all the best his-

torians, both ancient and modern. Nor do I blame them for it. By these improved or invented speeches, and by the heightenings thus given to their descriptions, their work becomes more interesting, and more useful; nobody is deceived, and historical truth is not materially affected. A medium is however to be observed in this, as in other things. When the historian lengthens a description into a detail of fictitious events, as Voltaire has done in his account of the battle of Fontenoy, he loses his credit with us, by raising a suspicion that he is more intent upon a pretty story, than upon the truth. And we are disgusted with his insincerity, when, in defiance even of verisimilitude, he puts long elaborate orations in the mouth of those, of whom we know, either from the circumstances that they could not, or from more authentick records that they did not, make any such orations; as Dionysius of Halicarnassus has done, in the case of Volumnia haranguing her son Coriolanus, and Flavius Josephus in that of Judah addressing his brother as viceroy of Egypt. From what these historians relates one would conjecture, that the Roman matron had studied at Athens under some long-winded rhetorician, and the Jewish patriarch must have been one of the most flowery orators of antiquity. But the fictitious part of history, or

of storytelling, ought never to take up much room; and must be highly blamable when it leads into any mistake either of facts or of characters.

Now, why do historians take the liberty to embellish their works in this manner? One reason, no doubt, is, that they may display their talents in oratory and narration: but the chief reason, as hinted already, is, to render their composition more agreeable. It would seem, then, that something more pleasing than real nature, or something which shall add to the pleasing qualities of real nature, may be devised by human fancy. And this may certainly be done. And this it is the poet's business to do. And when this is in any degree done by the historian, his narrative becomes in that degree poetical.

The possibility of thus improving upon nature must be obvious to every one. When we look at a landscape, we can fancy a thousand additional embellishments. Mountains loftier and more picturesque; rivers more copious, more limpid, and more beautifully winding; smoother and wider lawns; valleys more richly diversified; caverns and rocks more gloomy and more stupendous; ruins more majestick; buildings more magnificent; oceans more varied with islands, more splendid with shipping, or more agitated by

storm, than any we have ever seen, it is easy for human imagination to conceive. Many things in art and nature exceed expectation; but nothing sensible transcends, or equals, the capacity of thought: a striking evidence of the dignity of the human soul! The finest woman in the world appears to every eye susceptible of improvement, except perhaps to that of her lover. No wonder, then, if in poetry events can be exhibited more compact, and of more pleasing variety, than those delineated by the historian, and scenes of inanimate nature more dreadful or more lovely, and human characters more sublime and more exquisite both in good and evil. Yet still let nature supply the ground work and materials, as well as the standard of poetical fiction. The most expert painters use a layman, or other visible figure, to direct their hand and regulate their fancy. Homer himself founds his two poems on authentick tradition; and tragick as well as epick poets have followed the example. The writers of romance too are ambitious to interweave true adventures with their fables; and, when it can be conveniently done, to take the outlines of their plan from real life. Thus the tale of Robinson Crusoe is founded on an incident that actually befel one Alexander Selkirk, a seafaring man, who lived several years alone in the island of Juan Fernan-

des; Smollet is thought to have given us several of his own adventures in the history of Roderick Random; and the chief characters in Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and Pamela, are said to have been copied from real originals. Dramatick comedy, indeed, is for the most part purely fictitious; for if it were to exhibit real events as well as present manners, it would become too personal to be endured by a well bred audience, and degenerate into downright abuse; which appears to have been the case with the *old comedy* of the Greeks.* But, in general, hints taken from real existence will be found to give no little grace and stability to fiction, even in the most fanciful poems. Those hints, however, may be improved by the poet's imagination, and set off with every probable ornament that can be devised, consistently with the design and genius of the work; or, in other words, with the sympathies that the poet means to awaken in the mind of his reader. For mere poetical ornament, when it fails to interest the affections, is not only useless but improper: all true poetry being addressed to the heart, and intended to give pleasure by raising or soothing the passions, the only effectual way of pleasing a rational and

* Compare Hor. lib. 1. sat. 4. vers. 1. 5. with Ar. Poet. vers. 281. 285.

moral creature. And therefore I would take Horace's maxim to be universal in poetry, "Non "satis est, pulchra esse poemata; *dulcia* sunto;" "It is not enough that poems be beautiful; let "them also be *affecting*:" for that this is the meaning of the word *dulcia* in this place, is admitted by the best interpreters, and is indeed evident from the context.†

That the sentiments and feelings of percipient beings, when expressed in poetry, shall call forth our affections, is natural enough; but can descriptions of inanimate things also be made affecting? Certainly they can: and the more they affect, the more they please us; and the more poetical we allow them to be. Virgil's Georgick is a noble specimen (and indeed the noblest in the world) of this sort of poetry. His admiration of external nature gains upon a reader of taste, till it rise to perfect enthusiasm. The following observations will perhaps explain this matter.

Every thing in nature is complex in itself, and bears innumerable relations to other things; and may therefore be viewed in an endless variety of lights, and consequently described in an endless variety of ways. Some descriptions are good, and others bad. An historical description that enume-

† Hor. Ar. Poët. vers. 95. 100.

rates all the qualities of any object, is certainly good, because it is true; but may be as unaffecting as a logical definition. In poetry no unaffecting description is good, however conformable to truth; for here we expect not a complete enumeration of qualities, (the chief end of the art being to please) but only such enumeration as may give a lively and interesting idea. It is not memory, or the knowledge of rules, that can qualify a poet for this sort of description; but a peculiar liveliness of fancy and sensibility of heart, the nature whereof we may explain by its effects, but we cannot lay down rules for the attainment of it.

When our mind is occupied by any emotion, we naturally use words, and meditate on things, that are suitable to it, and tend to encourage it. If a man were to write a letter when he is very angry, there would probably be something of vehemence or bitterness in the style, even though the person to whom he wrote were not the object of his anger. The same thing holds true of every other strong passion or emotion: while it predominates in the mind, it gives a peculiarity to our thoughts, as well as to our voice, gesture, and countenance: and hence we expect, that every personage introduced in poetry should see things through the medium of his ruling passion,

and that his thoughts and language should be tinctured accordingly. A melancholy man walking in a grove, attends to those things that suit and encourage his melancholy; the sighing of the wind in the trees, the murmuring of waters, the darkness and solitude of the shades: a cheerful man in the same place, finds many subjects of cheerful meditation, in the singing of birds, the brisk motions of the babbling stream, and the liveliness and variety of the verdure. Persons of different characters, contemplating the same thing, a Roman triumph, for instance, feel different emotions, and turn their view to different objects. One is filled with wonder at such a display of wealth and power; another exults in the idea of conquest, and pants for military renown; a third, stunned with clamour, and harassed with confusion, wishes for silence, security, and solitude; one melts with pity to the vanquished, and makes many a sad reflection upon the insignificance of worldly grandeur, and the uncertainty of human things; while the buffoon, and perhaps the philosopher, considers the whole as a vain piece of pageantry, which, by its solemn procedure, and by the admiration of so many people, is only rendered the more ridiculous: and each of these persons would describe it in a way suitable to his own feelings, and tending to raise the

same in others. We see in Milton's Allegro and Penseroso, how a different cast of mind produces a variety in the manner of conceiving and contemplating the same rural scenery. In the former of these excellent poems, the author personates a cheerful man, and takes notice of those things in external nature that are suitable to cheerful thoughts, and tend to encourage them; in the latter, every object described is serious and solemn, and productive of calm reflection and tender melancholy: and I should not be easily persuaded, that Milton wrote the first under the influence of sorrow, or the second under that of gladness. We often see an author's character in his works; and if every author were in earnest when he writes, we should oftener see it. Thomson was a man of piety and benevolence, and a warm admirer of the beauties of nature; and every description in his delightful poem on the seasons tends to raise the same delightful affections in his reader. The parts of nature that attract his notice are those which an impious or hardhearted man would neither attend to nor be affected with, at least in the same manner. In Swift we see a turn of mind very different from that of the amiable Thomson; little relish for the sublime or beautiful, and a perpetual succession of violent emotions. All his pictures of human

life seem to show, that deformity and meanness were the favourite objects of his attention, and that his soul was a constant prey to indignation,* disgust, and other gloomy passions arising from such a view of things. And it is the tendency of almost all his writings (though it was not always the author's design) to communicate the same passions to his reader: insomuch, that, notwithstanding his erudition and knowledge of the world, his abilities as a popular orator and man of business, the energy of his style, the elegance of some of his verses, and his extraordinary talents in wit and humour, there is reason to doubt, whether by studying his works, any person was ever much improved in piety or benevolence.

And thus we see, how the compositions of an ingenious author may operate upon the heart, whatever be the subject. The affections that prevail in the author himself direct his attention to objects congenial, and give a peculiar bias to his inventive powers, and a peculiar colour to his language. Hence his work, as well as face, if nature is permitted to exert herself freely in it, will

* For part of this remark we have his own authority, often in his letters, and very explicitly in the Latin epitaph which he composed for himself: "ubi sæva "indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit." *See his last will and testament.*

exhibit a picture of his mind, and awaken correspondent sympathies in the reader. When these are favourable to virtue, which they always ought to be, the work will have that *sweet pathos* which Horace alludes to in the passage abovementioned; and which we so highly admire, and so warmly approve, even in those parts of the Georgick that describe inanimate nature.

Horace's account of the matter in question differs not from what is here given. "It is not "enough," says he, "that poems be beautiful; "let them be affecting, and agitate the mind "with whatever passions the poet wishes to im- "part. The human countenance, as it smiles on "those who smile, accompanies also with sym- "pathetick tears those who mourn. If you would "have me weep, you must first weep yourself; "then, and not before, shall I be touched with "your misfortunes. For nature *first* makes the "emotions of our mind correspond with our cir- "cumstances, infusing real joy, sorrow, or re- "sentment, according to the occasion; and *after- "wards* gives the true pathetick utterance, to the "voice and language."* This doctrine, which concerns the orator and the player no less than the poet, is strictly philosophical, and equally

* Ar. Poet. vers. 99. 111

applicable to dramatick, to descriptive, and indeed to every species of interesting poetry. The poet's sensibility must first of all engage him warmly in his subject, and in every part of it; otherwise he will labour in vain to interest the reader. If he would paint external nature, as Virgil and Thomson have done, so as to make her amiable to others, he must first be enamoured of her himself; if he would have heroes and heroines speak the language of love or sorrow, devotion or courage, ambition or anger, benevolence or pity, his heart must be susceptible of these emotions, and in some degree feel them, as long at least as he employs himself in framing words for them; being assured, that

He best shall paint them who can feel them most.*

The true poet, therefore, must not only study nature, and know the reality of things; but must also possess fancy, to invent additional decorations; judgment, to direct him in the choice of such as accord with verisimilitude; and sensibility, to enter with ardent emotions into every part of his subject, so as to transfuse into his work a pathos and energy sufficient to raise corresponding emotions in the reader.

* Pope's Eloisa. vers. 366.

"The historian and the poet," says Aristotle, "differ in this, that the former exhibits things as "they are, the latter as they might be:" * I suppose he means, in that state of perfection which is consistent with probability, and in which, for the sake of our own gratification, we wish to find them. If the poet, after all the liberties he is allowed to take with the truth, can produce nothing more exquisite than is commonly to be met with in history, his reader will be disappointed and dissatisfied. Poetical representations must therefore be framed after a pattern of the highest probable perfection that the genius of the work will admit: external nature must in them be more picturesque than in reality; action more animated; sentiments more expressive of the feelings and character, and more suitable to the circumstances of the speaker: personages better accomplished in those qualities that raise admiration, pity, terrour, and other ardent emotions; and events, more compact, more clearly connected with causes and consequences, and unfolded in an order more flattering to the fancy, and more interesting to the passions. But where, it may be said, is this pattern of perfection to be found? Not in real nature; otherwise history, which delineates real nature, would also delineate this pattern of perfec-

* Poetic. sect. 9.

tion. It is to be found only in the mind of the poet; and it is imagination, regulated by knowledge, that enables him to form it.

In the beginning of life, and while experience is confined to a small circle, we admire every thing, and are pleased with very moderate excellence. A peasant thinks the hall of his landlord the finest apartment in the universe, listens with rapture to the strolling balladsinger, and wonders at the rude wooden cuts that adorn his ruder compositions. A child looks upon his native village as a town; upon the brook that runs by, as a river; and upon the meadows and hills in the neighbourhood, as the most spacious and beautiful that can be. But when, after long absence, he returns in his declining years to visit, once before he die, the dear spot that gave him birth, and those scenes whereof he remembers rather the original charms than the exact proportions, how is he disappointed to find every thing so debased, and so diminished! The hills seem to have sunk into the ground, the brook to be dried up, and the village to be forsaken of its people; the parish church, stripped of all its fancied magnificence, is become low, gloomy, and narrow, and the fields now are only the miniature of what they were. Had he never left this spot, his notions might have remained the same as at first; and had he travelled but a little way from it, they would

not perhaps have received any material enlargement. It seems then to be from observation of many things of the same or similar kinds, that we acquire the talent of forming ideas more perfect than the real objects that lie immediately around us: and these ideas we may improve gradually more and more, according to the vivacity of our mind, and extent of our experience, till at last we come to raise them to a degree of perfection superiour to any thing to be found in real life. There cannot, sure, be any mystery in this doctrine; for we think and speak to the same purpose every day. Thus nothing is more common than to say, that such an artist excels all we have ever known in his profession, and yet that we can still conceive a superiour performance. A moralist, by bringing together into one view the separate virtues of many persons, is enabled to lay down a system of duty more perfect than any he has ever seen exemplified in human conduct. Whatever be the emotion the poet intends to raise in his reader, whether admiration or terrour, joy or sorrow; and whatever be the object he would exhibit, whether Venus or Tisiphone, Achilles or Thersites, a palace or a pile of ruins, a dance or a battle; he generally copies an idea of his own imagination; considering each quality as it is found to exist in several individuals of a

species, and thence forming an assemblage more or less perfect in its kind, according to the purpose to which he means to apply it.

Hence it would appear, that the ideas of poetry are rather general than singular; rather collected from the examination of a species or class of things, than copied from an individual. And this, according to Aristotle, is in fact the case, at least for the most part; whence that critick determines, that poetry is something more exquisite and more philosophical than history.* The historian may describe Bucephalus, but the poet delineates a war horse; the former must have seen the animal he speaks of, or received authentick information concerning it, if he mean to describe it historically; for the latter it is enough that he has seen several animals of that sort. The former tells us, what Alcibiades actually did and said; the latter, what such a species of human character as that which bears the name of Alcibiades would probably do or say in certain given circumstances.

It is indeed true, that the poet may, and often does, copy after individual objects. Homer, no doubt, took his characters from the life; or at least in forming them, was careful to follow tra-

* Poetic. sect. 9

dition as far as the nature of his plan would allow. But he probably took the freedom to add or heighten some qualities, and take away others; to make Achilles, for example, stronger, perhaps, and more impetuous, and more eminent for filial affection, and Hector more patriotick and more amiable, than he really was. If he had not done this, or something like it, his work would have been rather a history than a poem; would have exhibited men and things as they were, and not as they might have been; and Achilles and Hector would have been the names of individual and real heroes; whereas, according to Aristotle, they are rather to be considered as two distinct modifications or species of the heroick character. Shakspeare's account of the cliffs of Dover comes so near the truth, that we cannot doubt of its having been written by one who had seen them: but he who takes it for an exact historical description, will be surprised when he comes to the place, and finds those cliffs not half so lofty as the poet had made him believe. An historian would be to blame for such amplification; because, being to describe an individual precipice, he ought to tell us just what it is; which if he did, the description would suit that place, and perhaps no other in the whole world. But the poet means only to give an idea of what

such a precipice may be; and therefore his description may perhaps be equally applicable to many such chalky precipices on the seashore.

This method of copying after general ideas formed by the artist from observation of many individuals, distinguishes the Italian, and all the sublime painters, from the Dutch and their imitators. These give us bare nature, with the imperfections and peculiarities of individual things or persons; but those give nature improved as far as probability and the design of the piece will admit. Teniers and Hogarth draw faces, and figures, and dresses, from real life, and present manners; and therefore their pieces must in some degree lose the effect, and become awkward, when the present fashions become obsolete. Raphael and Reynolds take their models from general nature; avoiding, as far as possible, (at least in all their great performances) those peculiarities that derive their beauty from mere fashion; and therefore their works must give pleasure, and appear elegant, as long as men are capable of forming general ideas, and of judging from them. The lastmentioned incomparable artist is particularly observant of children, whose looks and attitudes, being less under the control of art and local manners, are more characteristical of the species, than those of men and women.

This field of observation has supplied him with many fine figures, particularly that most exquisite one of comedy, struggling for, and winning (for who could resist her!) the affections of Garrick: a figure, which could never have occurred to the imagination of a painter who had confined his views to grown persons looking and moving in all the formality of polite life; a figure, which in all ages and countries would be pronounced natural and engaging; whereas those human forms that we see every day bowing, and courtesying, and strutting, and turning out their toes, *secundum artem*, and dressed in ruffles, and wigs, and flounces, and hoop petticoats, and fulltrimmed suits, would appear elegant no further than the present fashions are propagated, and no longer than they remain unaltered.

I have heard it disputed, whether a portrait ought to be habited according to the fashion of the times, or in one of those dresses which, on account of their elegance, or having been long in use, are affected by great painters, and therefore called picturesque. The question may be determined upon the principles here laid down. If you wish to have a portrait of your friend, that shall always be elegant, and never aukward, choose a picturesque dress. But if you mean to preserve the remembrance of a particular suit of clothes,

without minding the ridiculous figure which your friend will probably cut in it a hundred years hence, you may array his picture according to the fashion. The history of dresses may be worth preserving: but who would have his image set up, for the purpose of hanging a coat or periwig upon it, to gratify the curiosity of antiquarian tailors or wigmakers?

There is, in the progress of human society, as well as of human life, a period to which it is of great importance for the higher order of poets to attend, and from which they will do well to take their characters, and manners, and the era of their events; I mean, that wherein men are raised above savage life, and considerably improved by arts, government, and conversation; but not advanced so high in the ascent towards politeness, as to have acquired a habit of disguising their thoughts and passions, and of reducing their behaviour to the uniformity of the mode. Such was the period which Homer had the good fortune (as a poet) to live in, and to celebrate. This is the period at which the manners of men are most picturesque, and their adventures most romantick. This is the period when the appetites, unperverted by luxury, the powers unenervated by effeminacy, and the thoughts disengaged from artificial restraint, will, in persons of similar dis-

positions and circumstances, operate in nearly the same way; and when, consequently, the characters of particular men will approach to the nature of poetical or general ideas, and, if well imitated, give pleasure to the whole, or at least to a great majority of mankind. But a character tinctured with the fashions of polite life would not be so generally interesting. Like a human figure adjusted by a modern dancing master, and dressed by a modern tailor, it may have a good effect in satire, comedy, or farce; but if introduced into the higher poetry, it would be admired by those only who had learned to admire nothing but present fashions, and by them no longer than the present fashions lasted; and to all the rest of the world would appear aukward, unaffecting, and perhaps ridiculous. But Achilles and Sarpedon, Diomede and Hector, Nestor and Ulysses, as drawn by Homer, must in all ages, independently on fashion, command the attention and admiration of mankind. These have the qualities that are universally known to belong to human nature; whereas the modern fine gentleman is distinguished by qualities that belong only to a particular age, society, and corner of the world. I speak not of moral or intellectual virtues, which are objects of admiration to every age; but of those outward accomplishments, and that parti-

cular temperature of the passions, which form the most perceptible part of a human character. As, therefore, the politician, in discussing the rights of mankind, must often allude to an imaginary state of nature; so the poet who intends to raise admiration, pity, terrour, and other important emotions, in the generality of mankind, especially in those readers whose minds are most improved, must take his pictures of life and manners, rather from the heroick period we now speak of, than from the ages of refinement; and must therefore (to repeat the maxim of Aristotle) " exhibit things, not as they are, but as they " might be."

If, then, there be any nations who entertain such a partiality in favour of one system of artificial manners, that they cannot endure any other system, either artificial or natural; may we not fairly conclude, that in those nations epick poetry will not flourish? How far this may account for any particularities in the taste and literature of a neighbouring nation,* is submitted to the

* Je me souviens, que lorsque je consultai, sur ma Henriade, feu M. de Malezieux, homme qui joignait une grande imagination à une literature immense, il me dit: Vous entreprenez un ouvrage qui n'est pas fait pour notre nation; LES FRANÇAIS N'ONT PAS LA TETE EPIQUE.

Voltaire. Essai sur la Poesie Epique, chap. 9.

reader. Were a man so perverted by nature, or by habit, as to think no state of the human body graceful, but what depends on lace and fringe, powder and pomatum, buckram and whalebone, I should not wonder, if he beheld with dissatisfaction the naked majesty of the Apollo Belvidere, or the flowing simplicity of robe that arrays a Cicero or Flora. But if one of his favourite figures were to be carried about the world in company with these statues, I believe the general voice of mankind would not ratify his judgment. Homer's simple manners may disgust a Terrasson, or a Chesterfield; but will always please the universal taste, because they are more picturesque in themselves, than any form of artificial manners can be, and more suitable to those ideas of human life which are most familiar to the human mind.

Let it not be thought, that I have any partiality to the tenets of those philosophers who recommend the manners of the heroick period, or even of the savage state, as better in a moral view, than those of our own time; or that I mean any reflection upon the virtue or good sense of the age, when I speak disrespectfully of some fashionable articles of external decoration. Our dress and attitudes are not perhaps so graceful as they might be: but that is not our fault, for it depends

on causes which are not in our power: that affects not the virtue of any good man, and no degree of outward elegance will ever reform the heart of a bad one: and that is no more a proof of our ill taste, than the roughness of our language, or the coldness of our climate. As a moralist, one would estimate the things of this life by their influence on the next; but I here speak as a critick, and judge of things according to their effects in the fine arts. Poetry, as an instrument of pleasure, gives the preference to those things that have most variety and operate most powerfully on the passions; and, as an art that conveys instruction rather by example than by precept, must exhibit evil as well as good, and vitious as well as virtuous characters. That savages, and heroes like those of Homer, may sleep sounder; and eat and drink, and perhaps fight, with a keener appetite, than modern Europeans; that they may excel us in strength, swiftness, and many sorts of manual dexterity; in a word, that they may be *finer animals* than we; and further, that, being subject to fewer restraints both from virtue and from delicacy, they may display a more animated picture of the undisguised energies of the human soul, I am very willing to allow; but I hold, that the manners of polished life are beyond comparison more favourable to

that benevolence, piety, and self-government, which are the glory of the christian character, and the highest perfection of our nature, as rational and immortal beings. The former state of mankind I would therefore prefer as the best subject of epick and tragick poetry: but for supplying the means of real happiness here, and of eternal felicity hereafter, every man of reflection, unless blinded by hypothesis, or by prejudice, must give the preference to the latter.

CHAPTER IV.

The Subject continued. Of Poetical Characters.

HORACE seems to think, that a competent knowledge of moral philosophy will fit an author for assigning the suitable qualities and duties to each poetical personage.* The maxim may be true, as far as mere morality is the aim of the poet; but cannot be understood to refer to the delineation of poetical characters in general: for a thorough acquaintance with all the moral philosophy in the world would not have enabled Blackmore to paint such a personage as Homer's Achilles, Shakspeare's Othello, or the Satan of Paradise Lost. To a competency of moral science, there must be added an extensive knowledge of mankind, a warm and elevated imagination, and the greatest sensibility of heart, before a genius can be formed equal to so difficult a task. Horace is indeed so sensible of the danger of introducing a new character in poetry, that he even discourages the attempt, and advises the poet rather to

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 309—316.

take his persons from the ancient authors, or from tradition. *

To conceive the idea of a good man, and to invent and support a great poetical character, are two very different things, however they may seem to have been confounded by some late criticks. The first is easy to any person sufficiently instructed in the duties of life; the last is perhaps of all the efforts of human genius the most difficult; so very difficult, that, though attempted by many, Homer, Shakspeare and Milton, are almost the only authors who have succeeded in it But characters of perfect virtue are not the most proper for poetry. It seems to be agreed, that the Deity should not be introduced in the machinery of a poetical fable. To ascribe to him words and actions of our own invention, is in my judgment very unbecoming; nor can a poetical description, that is known to be, and must of necessity be, infinitely inadequate, ever satisfy the human mind.† Poetry, according to the best criticks, is an

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 119—130.

† It is somewhat amusing to observe, what different ideas our poets have entertained of the manner of speaking that may be most suitable to the divine nature. Milton ascribes to him that mode of reasoning which in his own age was thought to be the most sacred and most important. Cowley, in his *Davideis*, introduces the

imitation of human action; and therefore poetical characters, though elevated, should still partake of the passions and frailties of humanity. If it were not for the vices of some principle personages, the Iliad would not be either so interesting or so moral: the most moving and most eventful parts of the Æneid are those that describe the effects of unlawful passion: * the most instruc-

Deity speaking in the Alexandrine measure; from an opinion, no doubt, that a line of six feet has more dignity than one of five. Brown, on the contrary, in *The Cure of Saul*, supposes him to speak in rhyming verses of three syllables. And the author of *Preexistence, a poem*, in Dodsley's collection, thinks it more congruous, that the Supreme Being should "set wide the fate of "things," in a speech, "majestically long, repugnant "to all princes here," &c.

* The destruction of Troy, the war with Turnus, and the despair and death of Dido, are here alluded to. That the first was owing to criminal passion, is well known. On the fate of Turnus and Dido, I beg leave to offer a few remarks.

1. Turnus is a brave and gallant young prince; but his disobedience to the will of Jupiter, as repeatedly declared by oracles and prodigies whereof he could not misunderstand the meaning, (*Æneid.* vii. *vers.* 104. & 596.) in persisting to urge his claim to Lavinia, whom fate had destined to be the wife of his rival, engages him in the war which concludes with his death. We pity his fall, of which, however, himself, with his dying

tive tragedy in the world, I mean Macbeth, is founded in crimes of dreadful enormity: and if Milton had not taken into his plan the fall of our first parents, as well as their state of innocence,

breath, acknowledges the justice. Had he been less amiable, we should have been less interested in his fate; had he been more virtuous, the poet must either have omitted the Italian war altogether, or brought it about by means less probable perhaps, and less honourable to the Trojans, and consequently to Rome. Piety to the gods is every where recommended by Virgil as the first and greatest human virtue, to which all other duties and all other affections are to give place, when they happen to be inconsistent.

2. The loves of Eneas and Dido are criminal on both sides. By connecting himself with this unfortunate queen, with whom he knew that he could not, without disobedience to the will of heaven, remain, he is guilty, not only of impiety, but also of a temporary neglect of duty to his people as their leader and sovereign: and she, in obtruding herself upon the Trojan prince, violates the most solemn vows, and acts a part of which she could not be ignorant, that it was incompatible with his destiny; for he had told her from the first, that he was appointed by fate to settle his Trojans in Italy, and to marry a wife of that country. *Æneid.* ii. 781. Dido has many great and many amiable qualities: yet the Poet blends in her character some harsh ingredients; with a view, no doubt, partly to reconcile us in some measure to her sad catastrophe, but chiefly to make her appear in the eyes of his countrymen an adequate repre-

his divine poem must have wanted much of its pathos, and could not have been (what it now is) such a treasure of important knowledge, as no other uninspired writer ever comprehended in so

sentative of that people, who had so long been the object of their jealousy and hatred. Her passion for Eneas is disrespectful to the gods, injurious to that prince and his followers, and indecent in itself: she is somewhat libertine in her religious principles; a shocking circumstance in a lady, and which to our pious poet must have been peculiarly offensive: and her behaviour, when Eneas is going to leave her, though suitable to a haughty princess under the power of a passion more violent than delicate, is not at all what we should expect from that softness of nature, and gentleness of affection, without which no woman can be truly amiable. If we except her wish for a young Eneas, there is hardly one sentiment of feminine tenderness, in all her threats, complaints and expostulations. Pride, self-condemnation, and revenge, engross her whole soul, and extinguish every other thought; and she concludes her life, by imprecating with cool, but dreadful solemnity, perdition upon the fugitive Trojan, and misery upon his people, and their descendants, for ever.

Virgil has been blamed for some things in the conduct of this part of the poem, I know not with what good reason. He was not obliged to give moral perfection to his characters. That of Eneas, if it had been less perfect, might perhaps have made the poem more animated; but then it would not have suited the poet's main design of reconciling the Romans to the person

small a compass. Virtue, like truth, is uniform and unchangeable. We may anticipate the part a good man will act in any given circumstances; and therefore the events that depend on such a

and government of Augustus, of whom Eneas is to be considered as the poetical type. This hero does indeed, in attaching himself to Dido, act inconsistently with his pious and patriotick character; but his fault is human, and not without circumstances of alleviation; and we must not estimate the morality of an action by its consequences, except where they might have been foreseen. But he is no sooner reprimanded by Mercury for his transgression, than he returns to his duty, notwithstanding his liking to the country, and his love for the lady, which now seems to be more delicate, than hers for him. But is not Dido's fault also human, and attended also with alleviating circumstances? and if so, is not her punishment greater than her crime? Granting all this, it will not follow, that Virgil is to blame. Poetry, if strict retributive justice were always to be expected in it, would not be an imitation of human life: and, as all its great events would be anticipated, and exactly such as we wish for, could melt or surprise us no longer. In fact, unlawful love has, in every age, been attended with worse consequences to the weaker, than to the stronger sex; not because it is less unlawful in the one than in the other: but that the former may be guarded by the strongest motives of interest, as well as of honour and duty; and the latter restrained by every principle, not only of conscience, but also of generosity and compassion. Our poet assigns to Dido, in the shades

man must be less surprising than those that proceed from passion; the vicissitudes whereof it is frequently impossible to foresee. From the violent temper of Achilles, in the Iliad, spring many

below, one of the least uncomfortable situations in the *region of mourning;* from whence, according to his system, (see the *Essay on Truth*, part 3. chap. 2.) after undergoing the necessary pains of purification, she was to pass into Elysium, and enjoy the pleasures of that happy place for a thousand years; and afterwards to be sent back to earth to animate another body, and thus have another opportunity of rising to virtue and happiness by a suitable behaviour.

Those incidents, and those only, are blamable in a poem, which either hurt the main design, or are in themselves unnatural, insipid, or immoral. The episode of Dido, as Virgil has given it, is perfectly consonant with his main design, for it sets his hero in a new light, and raises our idea of his personal accomplishments; and must have been particularly interesting to the Romans, as it accounts for their jealousy of Carthage, one of the most important events in all their history. Unnatural or insipid this episode cannot be called; for it is without doubt the finest piece of poetry in the world: the whole description of Dido's love, in every period of its progress, from its commencement to its lamentable conclusion, is sublime, and harmonious, natural, pathetick, and picturesque, to a degree which was never equalled, and never can be surpassed. And who will object to the morality of that fable, which recommends piety and patriotism as the most indispensable duties of a sovereign; and paints, in the most ter-

great incidents; which could not have taken place, if he had been calm and prudent like Ulysses, or pious and patriotick like Eneas: his rejection of Agamemnon's offers, in the ninth book, arises from the violence of his resentment; his yielding to the request of Patroclus, in the sixteenth, from the violence of his friendship (if I may so speak) counteracting his resentment; and his restoring to Priam the dead body of Hector, in the twenty-fourth, from the violence of his affection to his own aged father, and his regard to the command of Jupiter, counteracting, in some measure, both his sorrow for his friend, and his thirst of vengeance. Besides, except where there is some degree of vice, it pains us too exquisitely to see misfortune; and therefore

rifying colours, the fatal effects of female imprudence, of opposition to the will of heaven, of the violation of solemn vows and the gratification of criminal desires.

As to the part that Venus and Juno take in this affair, against which I have heard some people exclaim; it is to be considered as a poetical figure, of sufficient probability in the days of Virgil; and only signifies, that Dido was ensnared in this unhappy amour, first by her love, and then by her ambition. See her conference with her sister in the beginning of the fourth book. The reader who loves Virgil as much as I wish him to do, will not be offended at the length of this note.

poetry would cease to have a pleasurable influence over our tender passions, if it were to exhibit virtuous characters only. And as, in life, evil is necessary to our moral probation, and the possibility of error to our intellectual improvement; so bad or mixed characters are useful in poetry, to give to the good such opposition as puts them upon displaying and exercising their virtue.

All those personages, however, in whose fortune the poet means that we should be interested, must have agreeable and admirable qualities to recommend them to our regard. And perhaps the greatest difficulty in the art lies in suitably blending those faults, which the poet finds it expedient to give to any particular hero, with such moral, intellectual, or corporeal accomplishments, as may engage our esteem, pity, or admiration, without weakening our hatred of vice, or love of virtue. In most of our novels, and in many of our plays, it happens unluckily, that the hero of the piece is so captivating, as to incline us to be indulgent to every part of his character, the bad as well as the good. But a great master knows how to give the proper directions to human sensibility, and, without any perversion of our faculties, or any confusion of right and wrong, to make the same person the object of very dif-

ferent emotions, of pity and hatred, of admiration and horrour. Who does not esteem and admire Macbeth, for his courage and generosity? who does not pity him when beset with all the terrours of a pregnant imagination, superstitious temper, and awakened conscience? who does not abhor him as a monster of cruelty, treachery, and ingratitude? His good qualities, by drawing us near to him, make us, as it were, eyewitnesses of his crime, and give us a fellowfeeling of his remorse; and, therefore, his example cannot fail to have a powerful effect in cherishing our love of virtue, and fortifying our minds against criminal impressions: whereas, had he wanted those good qualities, we should have kept aloof from his concerns, or viewed them with a superficial attention; in which case his example would have had little more weight, than that of the robber, of whom we know nothing, but that he was tried, condemned, and executed. Satan, in Paradise Lost, is a character drawn and supported with the most consummate judgment. The old furies and demons, Hecate, Tisiphone, Alecto, Megara, are objects of unmixed and unmitigated abhorrence; Tityus, Enceladus, and their brethren, are remarkable for nothing but impiety, deformity, and vastness of size; Pluto is, at best, an insipid personage; Mars, a hairbrained ruffian; Tasso's

infernal tyrant, an ugly and overgrown monster: but in the Miltonick Satan, we are forced to admire the majesty of the ruined archangel, at the same time that we detest the unconquerable depravity of the fiend. But, of all poetical characters, the Achilles of Homer * seems to me the most exquisite in the invention, and the most highly finished. The utility of this character in a moral view is obvious; for it may be considered as the source of all the morality of the Iliad. Had not the generous and violent temper of Achilles determined him to patronise the augur Calchas in defiance of Agamemnon, and afterwards, on being affronted by that vindictive commander, to abandon for a time the common cause of Greece; the fatal effects of dissension among

* I say, the Achilles of Homer. Latter authors have degraded the character of this hero, by supposing every part of his body invulnerable except the heel. I know not how often I have heard this urged as one of Homer's absurdities; and indeed the whole Iliad is one continued absurdity, on this supposition. But Homer all along makes his hero equally liable to wounds and death with other men. Nay, to prevent all mistakes in regard to this matter, (if those who cavil at the poet would but read his work) he actually wounds him in the right arm, by the lance of Asteropæus, in the battle near the river Scamander. See Iliad xxi. vers. 161—168.

confederates, and of capricious and tyrannical behaviour in a sovereign, would not have been the leading moral of Homer's poetry; nor could Hector, Sarpedon, Eneas, Ulysses, and other amiable heroes, have been brought forward to signalize their virtues, and recommend themselves to the esteem and imitation of mankind.

They who form their judgment of Achilles from the imperfect sketch given of him by Horace in the *Art of Poetry*;* and consider him only as a hateful composition of anger, revenge, fierceness, obstinacy, and pride, can never enter into the views of Homer, nor be suitably affected with his narration. All these vices are no doubt, in some degree, combined in Achilles; but they are tempered with qualities of a different sort, which render him a most interesting character, and of course make the Iliad a most interesting poem. Every reader abhors the faults of this hero; and yet, to an attentive reader of Homer, this hero must be the object of esteem, admiration, and pity; for he has many good as well as bad affections, and is equally violent in all: nor is he possessed of a single vice or virtue, which the wonderful art of the poet has not made subservient to the design of the poem, and to the pro-

* Vers. 121, 122.

gress and catastrophe of the action; so that the hero of the Iliad, considered as a poetical personage, is just what he would be, neither greater nor less, neither worse nor better. He is every where distinguished by an abhorrence of oppression, by a liberal and elevated mind, by a passion for glory, and by a love of truth, freedom, and sincerity. He is for the most part attentive to the duties of religion; and, except to those who have injured him, courteous and kind; he is affectionate to his tutor Phenix; and not only pities the misfortune of his enemy Priam, but in the most soothing manner administers to him the best consolation that poor Homer's theology could furnish. Though no admirer of the cause in which his evil destiny compels him to engage, he is warmly attached to his native land: and, ardent as he is in vengeance, he is equally so in love to his aged father Peleus, and to his friend Patroclus. He is not luxurious like Paris, nor clownish like Ajax; his accomplishments are princely, and his amusements worthy of a hero. Add to this, as an apology for the vehemence of his anger, that the affront he had received was (according to the manners of that age) of the most atrocious nature; and not only unprovoked, but such as, on the part of Agamemnon, betrayed a brutal insensibility to merit, as well as a proud, selfish, ungrate-

ful, and tyrannical disposition. And though he is often inexcusably furious, yet it is but justice to remark, that he was not naturally cruel;* and that his wildest outrages were such as in those rude times might be expected from a violent man of invincible strength and valour, when exasperated by injury, and frantick with sorrow. Our hero's claim to the admiration of mankind is indisputable. Every part of his character is sublime and astonishing. In his person, he is the strongest, the swiftest, and most beautiful of men: this last circumstance, however, occurs not to his own observation, being too trivial to attract the notice of so great a mind. The fates had put it in his power, either to return home before the end of the war, or to remain at Troy: if he chose the former, he would enjoy tranquillity and happiness in his own country to a good old age; if the latter, he must perish in the bloom of his youth: his affection to his father and native country, and his hatred to Agamemnon, strongly urged him to the first; but a desire to avenge the

* See Iliad xxi. 100. and xxiv. 485. 673. In the first of these passages, Achilles himself declares, that before Patroclus was slain, he often spared the lives of his enemies, and took pleasure in doing it. It is strange that this should be left out in Pope's translation.

death of his friend determines him to accept the last, with all its consequences. This at once displays the greatness of his fortitude, the warmth of his friendship, and the violence of his sanguinary passions: and it is this that so often and so powerfully recommends him to the pity, as well as admiration, of the attentive reader. But the magnanimity of this hero is superiour, not only to the fear of death, but also to prodigies, and those too of the most tremendous import. I allude to the speech of his horse Xanthus, in the end of the nineteenth book, and to his behaviour on that occasion; and I shall take the liberty to expatiate a little upon that incident, with a view to vindicate Homer, as well as to illustrate the character of Achilles.

The incident is marvellous, no doubt, and has been generally condemned even by the admirers of Homer; yet to me, who am no believer in the infallibility of the great poet, seems not only allowable, but useful and important. That this miracle has probability enough to warrant its admission into Homer's poetry, is fully proved by Madame Dacier. It is the effect of Juno's power; which if we admit in other parts of the poem, we ought not to reject in this; and in the poetical history of Greece, and even in the civil history of Rome, there are similar fables, which were once in no

small degree of credit. But neither Mr. Dacier, nor any other of the commentators, (so far as I know) has taken notice of the propriety of introducing it in this place, nor of its utility in raising our idea of the hero. Patroclus was now slain; and Achilles, forgetting the injury he had received from Agamemnon, and frantick with revenge and sorrow, was rushing to the battle, to satiate his fury upon Hector and the Trojans. This was the critical moment on which his future destiny depended. It was still in his power to retire, and go home in peace to his beloved father and native land, with the certain prospect of a long and happy, though inglorious, life: if he went forward to the battle, he might avenge his friend's death upon the enemy, but his own must inevitably happen soon after. This was the decree of fate concerning him, as he himself very well knew. But it would not be wonderful, if such an impetuous spirit should forget all this, during the present paroxysm of his grief and rage. His horse, therefore, miraculously gifted by Juno for that purpose, after expressing, in dumb show, the deepest concern for his lord, opens his mouth, and in human speech announces his approaching fate. The fear of death, and the fear of prodigies, are different things; and a brave man, though proof against the one, may yet be overcome by the other. "I

" have known a soldier (says Addison) that has " entered a breach, affrighted at his own shadow; " and look pale upon a little scratching at his door, " who the day before had marched up against a " battery of cannon."* But Achilles, of whom we already knew that he feared nothing human, now shows, what we had not as yet been informed of, and what must therefore heighten our idea of his fortitude, that he is not to be terrified or moved, by the view of certain destruction, or even by the most alarming prodigies. I shall quote Pope's translation, which in this place is equal, if not superiour to the original.

Then ceas'd for ever, by the furies tied,
His fateful voice. Th' intrepid chief replied,
With unabated rage: " So let it be!
Portents and prodigies are lost on me.
I know my fate; to die, to see no more
My much lov'd parents, and my native shore.
Enough: when heaven ordains, I sink in night.
Now perish, Troy." He said, and rush'd to fight.

It is equally a proof of rich invention and exact judgment in Homer, that he mixes some good qualities in all his bad characters, and some degree of imperfection in almost all his good ones. Agamemnon, notwithstanding his pride, is an able general, and a valiant man, and highly

* Spectator, No. 12

esteemed as such by the greater part of the army: Paris, though effeminate, and vain of his dress and person, is, however, goodnatured, patient of reproof, not destitute of courage, and eminently skilled in musick, and other fine arts. Ajax is a huge giant; fearless rather from insensibility to danger, and confidence in his massy arms, than from any nobler principle; boastful and rough; regardless of the gods, though not downright impious:* yet there is in his manner something of frankness and blunt sincerity, which intitle him to a share in our esteem; and he is ever ready to assist his countrymen, to whom he renders good service on many a perilous emergency. The character of Helen, in spite of her faults, and of the many calamities whereof she is the guilty cause, Homer has found means to recommend to our pity, and almost to our love: and this he does,

* His natural bluntness appears in that short, but famous address, to Jupiter, in the nineteenth book, when a preternatural darkness hindered him from seeing either the enemy or his own people. The prayer seems to be the effect rather of vexation, than of piety or patriotism. Pope gives a more solemn turn to it, than either Homer's words, or the character of the speaker, will justify.

——— Lord of earth and air!
O King, O Father, hear my humble prayer, &c

without seeking to extenuate the crime of Paris, of which the most respectable personages in the poem are made to speak with becoming abhorrence. She is so full of remorse, so ready on every occasion to condemn her past conduct, so affectionate to her friends, so willing to do justice to every body's merit, and withal so finely accomplished, that she extorts our admiration, as well as that of the Trojan senators. Menelaus, though sufficiently sensible of the injury he had received, is yet a man of moderation, clemency, and goodnature, a valiant soldier, and most affectionate brother; but there is a dash of vanity in his composition, and he entertains rather too high an opinion of his own abilities; yet never overlooks or undervalues the merit of others. Priam would claim unreserved esteem, as well as pity, if it were not for his inexcusable weakness, in gratifying the humour, and by indulgence abetting the crimes, of the most worthless of all his children, to the utter ruin of his people, family and kingdom. Madame Dacier supposes that he had lost his authority, and was obliged to fall in with the politicks of the times: but of this I find no evidence; on the contrary, he and his unworthy favourite Paris seem to have been the only persons of distinction in Troy, who were averse to the restoring of Helen. Priam's foible (if it can be called by so soft a

name), however faulty is not uncommon, and has often produced calamity both in private and pub lick life. The scripture gives a memorable instance, in the history of the good old Eli. Sarpedon comes nearer a perfect character, than any other of Homer's heroes; but the part he has to act is short. It is a character, which one could hardly have expected in those rude times; a sovereign prince, who considers himself as a magistrate set up by the people for the publick good, and therefore bound in honour and gratitude to be himself their example, and study to excel as much in virtue, as in rank and authority. Hector is the favourite of every reader: and with good reason. To the truest valour he joins the most generous patriotism. He abominates the crime of Paris: but, not being able to prevent the war, he thinks it his duty to defend his country, and his father and sovereign, to the last. He too, as well as Achilles, foresees his own death; which heightens our compassion, and raises our idea of his magnanimity. In all the relations of private life, as a son, a father, a husband, a brother, he is amiable in the highest degree; and he is distinguished among all the heroes for tenderness of affection, gentleness of manners, and a pious regard to the duties of religion. One circumstance of his character, strongly expressive of a great and de-

licate mind, we learn from Helen's lamentation over his dead body—that he was almost the only person in Troy, who had always treated her with kindness, and never uttered one reproachful word to give her pain, nor heard others reproach her without blaming them for it. Some tendency to ostentation (which however may be pardonable in a commander in chief,) and temporary fits of timidity, are the only blemishes discoverable in this hero; whose portrait Homer appears to have drawn with an affectionate and peculiar attention. And it must convey a favourable idea of the good old bard, as well as of human nature, to reflect, that the same person who was loved and admired three thousand years ago, as a pattern of heroick excellence and manly virtue, is still an object of admiration and love to the most enlightened nations. This is one striking proof, that, notwithstanding the endless vicissitude to which human affairs are liable, the understanding and moral sentiments of men have continued nearly the same in all ages; and that the faculties whereby we distinguish truth and virtue are as really parts of our original nature, and as little obnoxious to the caprice of fashion, as our love of life, our senses of seeing and hearing, or the appetites of hunger and thirst. Rectitude of moral principle, and a spirit of good nature

and humanity, are indeed eminently conspicuous in this wonderful poet; whose works, in whatever light we consider them, as a picture of past ages, as a treasure of moral wisdom, as a specimen of the power of human genius, or as an affecting and instructive display of the human mind, are truly inestimable.

By ascribing so many amiable qualities to Hector, and some others of the Trojans, the poet interests us in the fate of that people, notwithstanding our being continually kept in mind, that they are the injurious party. And by thus blending good and evil, virtue and frailty, in the composition of his characters, he makes them the more conformable to the real appearances of human nature, and more useful as examples for our improvement: and at the same time, without hurting verisimilitude, gives every necessary embellishment to particular parts of his poem, and variety, coherence, and animation, to the whole fable. And it may also be observed, that though several of his characters are complex, not one of them is made up of incompatible parts: all are natural and probable, and such as we think we have met with, or might have met with, in our intercourse with mankind.

From the same extensive views of good and evil, in all their forms and combinations, Homer

has been enabled to make each of his characters perfectly distinct in itself, and different from all the rest; insomuch that, before we come to the end of the Iliad, we are as well acquainted with his heroes, as with the faces and tempers of our most familiar friends. Virgil, by confining himself to a few general ideas of fidelity and fortitude, has made his subordinate heroes a very good sort of people; but they are all the same, and we have no clear knowledge of any one of them. Achates is faithful and Gyas is brave; and Cloanthus is brave; and this is all we can say of the matter.* We see these heroes at a distance, and

* I cannot, however, admit the opinion of those who contend, that there is nothing of character in Virgil. Turnus is a good poetical character, but borrowed from Homer, being an Achilles in miniature. Mezentius is well drawn, and of the poet's own invention: a tyrant, who, together with impiety, has contracted intolerable cruelty and pride; yet intrepid in the field, and graced with one amiable virtue, sometimes found in very rugged minds, a tender affection to a most deserving son. In the good old king Evander, we have a charming picture of simple manners, refined by erudition, and uncorrupted by luxury. Dido has been already analyzed. There is nothing, I think, in Camilla, which might not be expected in any female warriour; but the adventures of her early life are romantick and interesting. The circumstance of her being, when an infant, thrown

have some notion of their shape and size; but are not near enough to distinguish their features: and every face seems to exhibit the same faint and ambiguous appearance. But of Homer's heroes we know every particular that can be known. We eat, and drink, and talk, and fight with them: we see them in action, and out of it; in the field, and in their tents and houses: the very face of the country about Troy, we seem to be as well acquainted with, as if we had been there. Similar characters there are among these heroes, as there are similar faces in every society: but we never mistake one for another. Nestor and Ulysses are both wise, and both eloquent; but the wisdom of the former seems to be the effect of experience; that of the latter, of genius: the eloquence of the one is sweet and copious, but not always to the purpose, and apt to degenerate into storytelling; that of the other is close, emphatical, and persuasive, and accompanied with a peculiar modesty and simplicity of manner. Homer's heroes are all valiant; yet each displays a modification of valour peculiar to himself. One is valiant from principle, another from constitu-

across a river, tied to a spear, is so very singular, that it would seem to have had a foundation in fact, or in tradition. Something similar is related by Plutarch of king Pyrrhus.

tion; one is rash, another cautious; one is impetuous and headstrong, another impetuous but tractable; one is cruel, another merciful; one is insolent and ostentatious, another gentle and unassuming; one is vain of his person, another of his strength, and a third of his family. It would be tedious to give a complete enumeration. Almost every species of the heroick character is to be found in Homer.

The Paradise Lost, though truly epick, cannot properly be called an heroick poem; for the agents in it are not heroes, but beings of a higher order.* Of these the poet's plan did not admit the introduction of many; but most of those whom he has introduced are well characterised. I have already spoken of his Satan, which is the highest imaginable species of the diabolical character. The inferiour species are well diversified, and in each variety distinctly marked: one is slothful, another avaricious, a third sophistical, a fourth furious; and though all are impious, some are more outrageously and blasphemously so, than

* Samson, in the *Agonistes*, is a species of the heroick character not to be found in Homer; distinctly marked, and admirably supported. And Delilah, in the same tragedy, is perhaps a more perfect model of an alluring, insinuating, worthless woman, than any other to be met with in ancient or modern poetry.

others. Adam and Eve, in the state of innocence, are characters well imagined, and well supported; and the different sentiments arising from difference of sex, are traced out with inimitable delicacy, and philosophical propriety. After the fall, he makes them retain the same characters, without any other change than what the transition from innocence to guilt might be supposed to produce: Adam has still that preeminence in dignity, and Eve in loveliness, which we should naturally look for in the father and mother of mankind. Of the blessed spirits, Raphael and Michael are well distinguished; the one for affability, and peculiar good will to the human race; the other for majesty, but such as commands veneration rather than fear. We are sorry to add, that Milton's attempt to soar still higher, only shows, that he had already soared as high, as, without being "blasted with excess of light," it is possible for the human imagination to rise.

I have been led farther into this subject of poetical characters than I intended to have gone, or than was necessary in the present investigation. For I presume, it was long ago abundantly evident, that the end of poetry is to please, and therefore that the most perfect poetry must be the most pleasing; that what is unnatural cannot give pleasure, and therefore that poetry must be according to nature; that it must

be either according to real nature, or according to nature somewhat different from the reality; that if according to real nature, it would give no greater pleasure than history, which is a transcript of real nature; that greater pleasure is, however, to be expected from it, because we grant it superiour indulgence, in regard to fiction and the choice of words; and, consequently, that poetry must be, not according to real nature, but according to nature improved to that degree, which is consistent with probability, and suitable to the poet's purpose.* And hence it is that we call

* Cum mundus sensibilis sit anima rationali dignitate inferior, videtur Poesis hæc humanæ naturæ largiri quæ historia denegat; atque animo umbris rerum utcunque satisfacera, cum solida haberi non possint. Si quis enim rem acutius introspiciat, firmum ex Poesi sumitur argumentum, magnitudinem rerum magis illustrem, ordinem magis perfectum, et varietatem magis pulchram, animæ humanæ complacere, quam in natura ipsa, post lapsum, reperiri ullo modo possit. Quapropter, cum res gestæ, et eventus, qui veræ historiæ subjiciuntur, non sint ejus amplitudinis, in qua anima humana sibi satisfaciat, præsto est Poesis, quæ facta magis heroica confingat. Cum historia vera successus rerum, minime pro meritis virtutum et scelerum narret; corrigit eam Poesis, et exitus, et fortunas, secundum merita, et ex lege Nemeseos, exhibet. Cum historia vera, obvia rerum satietate et similitudine, animæ humanæ fastidio sit; reficit eam Poesis, inexpectata, et varia, et vicissitudinum plena canens. Adeo

poetry AN IMITATION OF NATURE. For that which is properly termed *imitation* has always in it something which is not in the original. If the prototype and transcript be exactly alike; if there be nothing in the one which is not in the other; we may call the latter a representation, a copy, a draught, or a picture, of the former; but we never call it an imitation.

ut Poesis ista non solum ad delectationem, sed etiam ad animi magnitudinem, et ad mores conferat. Quare et merito etiam divinitatis particeps videri possit; quia animum erigit, et in sublime rapit; rerum simulacra ad animi desideria accommodando, non animum rebus (quod ratio facit et historia) submittendo.

Bacon, De Aug. Scient. pag. 168. *Lug. Bat.* 1645.

CHAPTER V.

Further Illustrations. Of Poetical Arrangement.

IT was formerly remarked, that the *events* of poetry must be "more compact, more clearly "connected with causes and consequences, and "unfolded in an order more flattering to the im- "agination, and more interesting to the pas- "sions," than the events of history commonly are. This may seem to demand some illustration.

I. Some parts of history interest us much; but others so little, that, if it were not for their use in the connection of events, we should be inclined to overlook them altogether. But all the parts of a poem must be interesting: great, to raise admiration or terrour; unexpected, to give surprise; pathetick, to draw forth our tender affections; important, from their tendency to the elucidation of the fable, or to the display of human character; amusing, from the agreeable pictures of nature they present us with; or of peculiar efficacy in promoting our moral improvement. And therefore, in forming an epick or dramatick fable,

from history or tradition, the poet must omit every event that cannot be improved to one or other of these purposes.

II. Some events are recorded in history, merely because they are true; though their consequences be of no moment, and their causes unknown. But of all poetical events, the causes ought to be manifest, for the sake of probability; and the effects considerable, to give them importance.

III. A history may be as long as you please; for, while it is instructive and true, it is still a good history. But a poem must not be too long: first, because to write good poetry is exceedingly difficult, so that a very long poem would be too extensive a work for human life, and too laborious for human ability; secondly, because, if you would be suitably affected with the poet's art, you must have a distinct remembrance of the whole fable, which could not be, if the fable were very long;* and thirdly, because poetry is addressed to the imagination and passions, which cannot long be kept in violent exercise, without working the mind into a disagreeable state, and even impairing the health of the body. That, by these three peculiarities of the poetical art, its powers of pleasing are heightened, and consequently its end promoted, is too obvious to require proof.

* Aristot. Poet. § 7

IV. The strength of a passion depends in part on the vivacity of the impression made by its object. Distress which we see, we are more affected with than what we only hear of; and, of several descriptions of an affecting object, we are most moved by that which is most lively. Every thing in poetry, being intended to operate on the passions, must be displayed in lively colours, and set as it were before the eyes: and therefore the poet must attend to many minute, though picturesque circumstances, that may, or perhaps must, be overlooked by the historian. Achilles putting on his armour, is described by Homer with a degree of minuteness, which, if it were the poet's business simply to *relate* facts, might appear tedious or impertinent; but which in reality answers a good purpose, that of giving us a distinct image of this dreadful warriour: it being the end of poetical description, not only to *relate* facts, but to *paint* them;* not merely to inform the

* Homer's poetry is always picturesque. Algarotti, after Lucian, calls him the prince of painters. He sets before us the whole visible appearance of the object he describes, so that the painter would have nothing to do but to work after his model. He has more epithets expressive of colour than any other poet I am acquainted with: *black* earth, *winecoloured* ocean, and even *white* milk, &c. This to the imagination of those readers who

judgment, and enrich the memory, but to awaken the passions, and captivate the imagination. Not that every thing in poetry is to be minutely described, or that every minute description must of

study the various colourings of nature is highly amusing, however offensive it may be to the delicacy of certain criticks; whose rules for the use of epithets if we were to adopt, we should take the palm of poetry from Homer, Virgil, and Milton, and bestow it on those simple rhymers, who, because they have no other merit, must be admired for barrenness of fancy, and poverty of language. An improper use of epithets is indeed a grievous fault. And epithets become improper:—1. When they add nothing to the sense, or to the picture; and still more, when,—2. They seem rather to take something from it;—3. When by their colloquial meanness they debase the subject. These three faults are all exemplified in the following lines:

The chariot of the King of kings, Which *active* troops
of angels drew,
On a strong tempest's *rapid* wings, With *most amazing*
swiftness flew. *Tate and Brady.*

4. Epithets are improper, when, instead of adding to the sense, they only exaggerate the sound. Homer's πολυφλοισβοιο θαλλασσης contains both an imitative sound, and a lively picture: but Thomson gives us nothing but noise, when he says, describing a thunder storm,

Follows the loosen'd aggravated roar,
Enlarging, deepening, mingling, peal on peal,

necessity be a long one. Nothing has a worse effect, than descriptions too long, too frequent, or too minute; witness the Davideis of Cowley: and the reader is never so effectually interested

Crush'd horrible, convulsing heaven and earth.
Summer.

The following line of Pope is perhaps liable to the same objection:

Then rustling, crackling, crashing, thunder down.
Iliad 23.

5. Epithets are faulty, when they overcharge a verse so as to hurt its harmony, and incumber its motion. 6. When they darken the sense, by crowding too many thoughts together. Both these faults appear in this passage:

Her eyes in liquid light luxurious swim,
And languish with unutterable love;
Heaven's *warm* bloom glows along each *brightening* limb,
Where fluttering *bland* the veil's *thin mantlings* rove.

Lastly, epithets are improper, when they recur more frequently, than the genius either of the language or of the composition will admit. For some languages are more liberal of epithets than others, the Italian, for instance, than the English; and some sorts of verse require a more perfect simplicity than others, those, for example, that express dejection or composure of mind, than those that give utterance to enthusiasm, indignation, and other ardent emotions.

in his subject, as when, by means of a few circumstances well selected, he is made to conceive a great many others. From Virgil's *Pulcherrima Dido*, and the following simile of Diana amidst her nymphs,* our fancy may form for itself a picture of feminine loveliness and dignity more

In general, epithets, that add to the sense, and at the same time assist the harmony, must be allowed to be ornamental, if they are not too frequent. Nor should those be objected to, which give to the expression either delicacy or dignity. And as these qualities do not at all times depend on the same principle, being in some degree determined by fashion, is there not reason for supposing, that the most exceptionable of Homer's epithets, those I mean which he applies to his persons, might in that remote age have had a propriety, whereof at present we have no conception? The epithets assumed by eastern kings seem ridiculous to an European; and yet perhaps may appear significant and solemn to those who are accustomed to hear them in the original language. Let it be observed too, that Homer composed his immortal work at a time when writing was not common; when people were rather hearers than readers of poetry, and could not often enjoy the pleasure even of hearing it; and when, consequently, the frequent repetition of certain words and phrases, being a help to memory, as well as to right apprehension of the poet's meaning, would be thought rather a beauty than a blemish. The same thing is observable in some of our old ballads.

* Virg. Æneid. lib. 1. vers. 500.

perfect than ever Cowley or Ovid could exhibit in their most elaborate descriptions. Nay, it has been justly remarked by the best criticks,* that, in the description of great objects, a certain degree of obscurity, not in the language, but in the picture or notion presented to the mind, has sometimes a happy effect in producing admiration, terrour, and other emotions connected with the sublime: as when the witches in Macbeth describe the horrours of their employment by calling it in three words, "a deed WITHOUT A NAME." But it is only a great artist, who knows when to be brief in description and when copious; where to light up his landscape with sunshine, and where to cover it with darkness and tempest. To be able to do this, without suffering the narration to languish in its progress, or to run out into an immoderate length; without hurrying us away from affecting objects before our passions have time to operate, or fixing our attention too long upon them, it will be proper, that the poet confine the action of his poem to a short period of time. But history is subject to no restraints, but those of truth; and without incurring blame, may take in any length of duration.

† Demet. Phaler. § 266. Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

V. The origin of nations, and the beginnings of great events, are little known, and seldom interesting; whence the first part of every history, compared with the sequel, is somewhat dry and tedious. But a poet must, even in the beginning of his work, interest the readers, and raise high expectation; not by any affected pomp of style, far less by ample promises or bold professions; but by setting immediately before them some incident, striking enough to raise curiosity, in regard both to its causes and to its consequences. He must therefore take up his story, not at the beginning, but in the middle; or rather, to prevent the work from being too long, as near the end as possible: and afterwards take some proper opportunity to inform us of the preceding events, in the way of narrative, or by the conversation of the persons introduced, or by short and natural digressions.

The action of both the Iliad and Odyssey begins about six weeks before its conclusion; although the principal events of the war of Troy are to be found in the former, and the adventures of a ten years' voyage, followed by the suppression of a dangerous domestick enemy, in the latter. One of the first things mentioned by Homer in the Iliad, is a plague, which Apollo in anger sent into the Grecian army commanded by Aga-

memnon, and now encamped before Troy. Who this Agamemnon was, and who the Grecians were; for what reason they had come hither; how long the siege had lasted; what memorable actions had been already performed, and in what condition both parties now were; all this, and much more, we soon learn from occasional hints and conversations interspersed through the poem.

In the Eneid, which, though it comprehends the transactions of seven years, opens within a few months of the concluding event, we are first presented with a view of the Trojan fleet at sea, and no less a person than Juno interesting herself to raise a storm for their destruction. This excites a curiosity to know something further: who these Trojans were; whence they had come, and whither they were bound; why they had left their own country, and what had befallen them since they left it. On all these points, the poet without quitting the track of his narrative, soon gives the fullest information. The storm rises; the Trojans are driven to Africa, and hospitably received by the queen of the country; at whose desire their commander relates his adventures.

The action of Paradise Lost commences not many days before Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden of Eden, which is the concluding event. This poem, as its plan is incompara-

bly more sublime and more important, than that of either the Iliad or Eneid, opens with a far more interesting scene: a multitude of angels and archangels shut up in a region of torment and darkness, and rolling on a lake of unquenchable fire. Who these angels are, and what brought them into this miserable condition, we naturally wish to know; and the poet in due time informs us; partly from the conversation of the fiends themselves, and more particularly by the mouth of a happy spirit, sent from heaven to caution the father and mother of mankind against temptation, and confirm their good resolutions by unfolding the dreadful effects of impiety and disobedience.

This poetical arrangement of events, so different from the historical, has other advantages besides those arising from brevity, and compactness of detail: it is obviously more affecting to the fancy, and more alarming to the passions; and, being more suitable to the order and the manner in which the actions of other men strike our senses, is a more exact imitation of human affairs. I hear a sudden noise in the street, and run to see what is the matter. An insurrection has happened, a great multitude is brought together, and something very important is going forward. The scene before me is the first thing that engages my attention; and is in itself so interesting, that

for a moment or two I look at it in silence and wonder. By and by, when I get time for reflection, I begin to inquire into the cause of all this tumult, and what it is the people would be at; and one who is better informed than I, explains the affair from the beginning; or perhaps I make this out for myself, from the words and actions of the persons principally concerned. This is a sort of picture* of poetical arrangement, both in epick and dramatick composition; and this plan has been followed in narrative odes and ballads both ancient and modern. The historian pursues a different method. He begins perhaps with an account of the manners of a certain age, and of the political constitution of a certain country; then introduces a particular person, gives the story of his birth, connections, private character, pursuits, disappointments, and of the events that promoted his views, and brought him acquainted with other turbulent spirits like himself; and so proceeds, unfolding, according to the order of time, the causes, principles, and progress of the conspiracy; if that be the subject which he undertakes to illustrate. It cannot be denied, that this latter

* This illustration, or something very like it, I think I have read in Batteux's Commentary on Horace's Art of Poetry.

method is more favourable to calm information: but the former compared with it, will be found to have all the advantages already specified, and to be more effectually productive of that mental pleasure which depends on the passions and imagination.

VI. If a work have no determinate end, it has no meaning; and if it has many ends, it will distract by its multiplicity. Unity of design, therefore, belongs in some measure to all compositions, whether in verse or prose. But to some it is more essential than to others; and to none so much as to the higher poetry. In certain kinds of history, there is unity sufficient, if all the events recorded be referred to one person; in others, if to one period of time, or to one people, or even to the inhabitants of one and the same planet. But it is not enough, that the subject of a poetical fable be the exploits of *one person;* for these may be of various and even of opposite sorts and tendencies, and take up longer time, than the nature of poetry can admit: far less can a regular poem comprehend the affairs of *one period*, or of *one people:* it must be limited to some *one great action or event*, to the illustration of which all the subordinate events must contribute; and these must be so connected with one another, as well as with the poet's general purpose, that one can-

not be changed, transposed or taken away, without affecting the consistence and stability of the whole.* In itself an incident may be interesting, a character well drawn, a description beautiful; and yet, if it disfigure the general plan, or if it obstruct or incumber the main action, instead of helping it forward, a correct artist would consider it as but a gaudy superfluity or splendid deformity; like a piece of scarlet cloth sowed upon a garment of a different colour.† Not that all the parts of the fable either are, or can be, equally essential. Many descriptions and thoughts of little consequence to the plan, may be admitted for the sake of variety; and the poet may, as well as the historian and philosopher, drop his subject for a a time, in order to take up an affecting or instructive digression.

The doctrine of poetical digressions and episodes has been largely treated by the criticks. I shall only remark, that, in estimating their propriety three things are to be attended to: their connexion with the fable or subject; their own peculiar excellence; and their subserviency to the poet's design.

1. Those digressions, that both arise from and

* Arist. Poet. § 8. † Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 15. &c.

terminate in the subject; like the episode of the angel Raphael in Paradise Lost, and the transition to the death of Cesar and the civil wars in the first book of the Georgick; are the most artful, and if suitably executed claim the highest praise: those that arise from, but do not terminate in the subject, are perhaps second in the order of merit; like the story of Dido in the Eneid, and the encomium on a country life in the second book of the Georgick; those come next, that terminate in, but do not rise from the fable; of which there are several in the third book of the Eneid, and in the Odyssey: and those, that neither terminate in the fable nor rise from it, are the least artful; and if they be long cannot escape censure, unless their beauty be very great.

But, 2. We are willing to excuse a beautiful episode, at whatever expense to the subject it may be introduced. They who can blame Virgil for obtruding upon them the charming tale of Orpheus and Euridice in the fourth Georgick, or Milton for the apostrophe to light in the beginning of his third book, ought to forfeit all title to the perusal of good poetry; for of such divine strains one would rather be the author, than of all the books of criticism in the world. Yet still it is better that an episode possess the beauty of

connection, together with its own intrinsick elegance, than this without the other.

Moreover, in judging of the propriety of episodes, and other similar contrivances, it may be expedient to attend, 3. To the *design* of the poet, as distinguished from the fable or subject of the poem. The great design, for example, of Virgil, was to interest his countrymen in a poem written with a view to reconcile them to the person and government of Augustus. Whatever, therefore, in the poem tends to promote this design, even though it should in some degree, hurt the contexture of the fable, is really a proof of the poet's judgment, and may not only be allowed but applauded. The progress of the action of the Eneid may seem to be too long obstructed, in one place, by the story of Dido, which though it rises from the preceding part of the poem, has no influence upon the sequel; and, in another, by the episode of Cacus, which, without injury to the *fable*, might have been omitted altogether. Yet these episodes, interesting as they are to us and to all mankind, because of the transcendent merit of the poetry, must have been still more interesting to the Romans, because of their connection with the Roman affairs: for the one accounts poetically for their wars with Carthage; and the other not only explains some of their religious ceremonies, but also gives a most charm-

ing picture of those hills and valleys in the neighbourhood of the Tiber, on which, in after times, their majestick city was fated to stand. And if we consider, that the design of Homer's Iliad was, not only to show the fatal effects of dissention among confederates, but also to immortalize his country, and celebrate the most distinguished families in it, we shall be inclined to think more favourably than criticks generally do, of his long speeches and digressions; which, though to us they may seem trivial, must have been very interesting to his countrymen, on account of the genealogies and private history recorded in them. Shakspeare's historical plays, considered as dramatick fables, and tried by the laws of tragedy and comedy, appear very rude compositions. But if we attend to the poet's *design* (as the elegant critick * has with equal truth and beauty explained it), we shall be forced to admire his judgment in the general conduct of those pieces, as well as unequalled success in the execution of particular parts.

There is yet another point of view (as hinted formerly) in which these digressions may be considered. If they tend to elucidate any important

* Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakspeare. pag. 55.

character, or to introduce any interesting event not otherwise within the compass of the poem, or to give an amiable display of any particular virtue, they may be entitled, not to our pardon only, but even to our admiration, however loosely they may hang upon the fable. All these three ends are effected by that most beautiful episode of Hector and Andromache in the sixth book of the Iliad; and the two last, by the no less beautiful one of Euryalus and Nisus, in the ninth of the Eneid.

The beauties of poetry are distinguishable into local and universal. The former may reflect great honour on the poet, but the latter are more excellent in themselves; and these chiefly we must be supposed to have in our eye, when we speak of the essential characters of the art. A well invented fable, as it is one of the most difficult operations of human genius,* must be allow-

* The difficulty of constructing an epick or dramatick fable may appear from the bad success of very great writers who have attempted it. Of dramatick fables there are indeed several in the world, which may be allowed to have come near perfection. But the beauty of Homer's fable remains unrivalled to this day. Virgil and Tasso have imitated, but not equalled it. That of Paradise Lost is artful, and for the most part judicious: I am certain the author would have equalled Homer in this,

ed to be one of the highest beauties of poetry. The *design*, as distinguished from the *fable*, may stand in need of commentators to explain it; but a well wrought fable is universally understood,

as he has excelled him in some other respects: but the nature of his plan would not admit the introduction of so many incidents, as we see in the Iliad, cooperating to one determined end. Of the comick epopee we have two exquisite models in English, I mean the *Amelia* and *Tom Jones* of Fielding. The introductory part of the latter follows indeed the historical arrangement, in a way somewhat resembling the practice of Euripides in his prologues, or at least as excusable: but, with this exception, we may venture to say, that both fables would bear to be examined by Aristotle himself, and, if compared with those of Homer, would not greatly suffer in the comparison. This author, to an amazing variety of probable occurrences, and of characters well drawn, well supported, and finely contrasted, has given the most perfect unity, by making them all cooperate to one and the same final purpose. It yields a very pleasing surprise to observe, in the unravelling of his plots, particularly that of *Tom Jones*, how many incidents, to which, because of their apparent minuteness, we had scarce attended as they occurred in the narrative, are found to have been essential to the plot. And what heightens our idea of the poet's art is, that all this is effected by natural means, and human abilities, without any machinery: while his great master Cervantes is obliged to work a miracle for the cure of Don

and universally pleasing. And if ever a poet shall arise, who to the art of Sophocles and Homer, can join the correctness and delicacy of Virgil, and the energy, variety, and natural colouring of Shakspeare, the world will then see something in poetry more excellent than we can at present conceive.

And now, from the position formerly established, that the end of this divine art is, *to give pleasure*, I have endeavoured to prove, that, whether in displaying the appearances of the material universe, or in imitating the workings of the human mind, and the varieties of human character, or in arranging and combining into one whole the several incidents and parts whereof his fable consists, the aim of the poet must be, to copy nature, not as it is, but in that state of perfection in which, consistently with the particular genius of the work, and the laws of verisimilitude, it may be supposed to be.

Quixote. Can any reason be assigned, why the inimitable Fielding, who was so perfect in epick fable, should have succeeded so indifferently in dramatick? Was it owing to the peculiarity of his genius, or of his circumstances? or to any thing in the nature of dramatick writings in general, or of that particular taste in dramatick comedy which Congreve and Vanburgh had introduced, and which he was obliged to comply with?

Such, in general, is the nature of that poetry which is intended to raise admiration, pity, and other *serious* emotions. But in this art, as in all others, there are different degrees of excellence; and we have hitherto directed our view chiefly to the highest. All serious poets are not equally solicitous to improve nature. Euripides is said to have represented men as they were; Sophocles, more poetically, as they should or might be.* Theocritus, in his Idyls, and Spenser, in his Shepherd's Calendar, give us language and sentiments, more nearly approaching those of the *rus verum et barbarum*,† than what we meet with in the Pastorals of Virgil and Pope. In the *historical drama*, human characters and events must be according to historical truth, or at least not so remote from it, as to lead into any important misapprehension of fact. And in the *historical epic poem*, such as the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, and the *Campaign* of Addison, the historical arrangement is preferred to the poetical, as being nearer the truth. Yet nature is a little improved even in those poems. The persons in Shakspeare's historical plays, and the heroes of the Pharsalia, talk in verse, and suitably to their characters, and with a readiness, beauty, and har-

* Aristot. Poet. † Martial.

mony of expression, not to be met with in real life, nor even in history; speeches are invented, and, to heighten the description, circumstances added, with great latitude; real events are rendered more compact and more strictly dependent upon one another, and fictitious ones brought in to elucidate human characters, and diversify the narration.

The more poetry improves nature, by copying after general ideas collected from extensive observation, the more it partakes (according to Aristotle) of the nature of philosophy; the greater strength of fancy and of observation it requires in the artist, and the better chance it has to be universally agreeable. An ordinary painter can give a portrait of a beautiful face: but from a number of such faces to collect a general idea of beauty more perfect than is to be found in any individual, and then to give existence to that idea, by drawing it upon canvas, (as Zeuxis is said to have done when he made a famous picture of Helen)* is a work which one must possess invention and judgment, as well as dexterity, to be able to execute. For it is not by copying the eyes of one lady, the lips of another, and the nose of a third, that such a picture is to be formed; a

* Plin. Hist. Natur. lib. 35.

medley of this kind would probably be ridiculous, as a certain form of feature may suit one face, which would not suit another: but it is by comparing together several beautiful mouths, (for example) remarking the peculiar charm of each; and then conceiving an idea of that feature, different perhaps from all, and more perfect than any: and thus proceeding through the several features, with a view, not only to the colour, shape, and proportion, of each part, but also to the harmony of the whole. It rarely happens, that an individual is so complete in any one quality as we could desire; and though it were in the opinion of some, it would not in that of all. A lover may think his mistress a model of perfection; she may have moles and freckles on her face, and an odd cast of her eye; and yet he shall think all this becoming: but another man sees her in a different light; discovers many blemishes perhaps, and but few beauties: thinks her too fat or too lean, too short or too tall. Now, what would be the consequence, if this lady's portrait were to appear in a picture, under the character of Helen or Venus? The lover would admire it; but the rest of the world would wonder at the painter's taste. Great artists have, however, fallen into this errour. Rubens, while he was drawing some of his pieces, would seem to have had but two

ideas of feminine loveliness; and those were copied from his two wives: all the world approves his conjugal partiality; but his taste in female beauty all the world does not approve.

Individual objects there are, no doubt, in nature, which command universal admiration. There are many women in Great Britain, whose beauty all the world would acknowledge. Nay, perhaps, there are some such in every nation: for, however capricious our taste for beauty may be esteemed by modern philosophers, I have been assured, that in the West Indies a female negro seldom passes for handsome among the blacks, who is not really so in the opinion of the white people. There are characters in real life, which, with little or no heightening, might make a good figure even in epick poetry: there are natural landscapes, than which one could not desire any thing of the kind more beautiful. But such individuals are not the most common; and therefore, though the rule is not without exceptions, it may however, be admitted as a rule, That the poet or painter, who means to adapt himself to the *general* taste, should copy after *general* ideas collected from extensive observation of nature. For the most part, the peculiarities of individuals are agreeable only to individuals; the manners of Frenchmen to Frenchmen; the dress of the sea-

son to the beaux and belles of the season; the sentiments and language of Newmarket, to the heroes of the turf, and their imitators. But manners and sentiments, dresses and faces, may be imagined, which shall be agreeable to all who have a right to be pleased: and these it is the business of the imitative artist to invent, and to exhibit.

Yet mere portraits are useful and agreeable; and poetry, even when it falls short of this philosophical perfection, may have great merit as an instrument of both instruction and pleasure. Some minds have no turn to abstract speculation, and would be better pleased with a *notion* of an individual than with an *idea* of a species; *

* *Idea*, according to the usage of the Greek philosophers, from whom we have the word, signifies, "A "thought of the mind which is expressed by a general "term." *Notion* is used by many English writers of credit to signify. "A thought of the mind which may "be expressed by a proper or individual name." Thus, I have a *notion* of London, but an *idea* of a city; a *notion* of a particular hero, but an *idea* of heroism. These two words have long been confounded by the best writers: but it were to be wished, that, as the things are totally different, the names had been so too. Had this been the case, a great deal of confusion peculiar to modern philoplhy, and arising from an ambiguous, and almost unlimited, use of the word *idea*, might have been prevented.

or with seeing in an historical picture or epick poem, the portraits or characters of their acquaintance, than the same form of face or disposition improved into a general idea.* And to most men, simple unadorned nature is, at certain times, and in certain compositions, more agreeable, than the most elaborate improvements of art; as a plain short period, without modulation, gives a pleasing variety to a discourse. Many such portraits of simple nature there are in the subordinate parts both of Homer and of Virgil's poetry: and an excellent effect they have (as was already observed) in giving probability to the fiction, † as well as in gratifying the reader's fancy with images distinct and lively, and easily comprehended. The historical plays of Shakspeare raise not our pity and terrour to such a height, as Lear, Macbeth, or Othello; but they interest and instruct

* An historical picture, like West's *Death of Wolfe*, in which the faces are all portraits of individual heroes, and the dresses according to the present mode, may be more interesting now, than if these had been more picturesque, and those expressive of different modifications of heroism. But in a future age, when the dresses are become unfashionable, and the faces no longer known as portraits, is there not reason to fear, that this excellent piece will lose of its effect?

† See chap. 3

us greatly, notwithstanding. The rudest of the eclogues of Theocritus, or even of Spenser, have by some authors been extolled above those of Virgil, because more like real life. Nay, Corneille is known to have preferred the Pharsalia to the Eneid, perhaps from its being nearer the truth; or perhaps from the sublime sentiments of stoical morality so forcibly and so ostentatiously displayed in it.

Poets may refine upon nature too much, as well as too little; for affectation and rusticity are equally remote from true elegance. The style and sentiments of comedy should no doubt be more correct and more pointed than those of the most polite conversation: but to make every footman a wit, and every gentleman and lady an epigrammatist, as Congreve has done, is an excessive and faulty refinement. The proper medium has been hit by Menander and Terence, by Shakspeare in his happier scenes, and by Garrick, Cumberland, and some others of late renown. To describe the passion of love with as little delicacy as some men speak of it, would be unpardonable; but to transform it into mere platonick adoration, is to run into another extreme, less criminal indeed, but too remote from universal truth, to be universally interesting. To the former extreme Ovid inclines; and Petrarch, and

his imitators, to the latter. Virgil has happily avoided both: but Milton has painted this passion, as distinct from all others, with such peculiar truth and beauty, that we cannot think Voltaire's encomium too high, when he says, that love in all other poetry seems a weakness, but in Paradise Lost a virtue. There are many good strokes of nature in Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd; but the author's passion for the *rus verum* betrays him into some indelicacies:* a censure that falls with greater weight upon Theocritus, who is often absolutely indecent. The Italian pastoral of Tasso and Guarini, and the French of Fontenelle, run into the opposite extreme, (though in some parts beautifully simple) and display a system of rural manners, so quaint and affected as to outrage all probability. I should oppose several great names, if I were to say, that Virgil has given the pastoral poem in its most perfect state; and yet I can-

* The language of this poem has been blamed, on account of its vulgarity. The Scotch dialect is sufficiently rustick, even in its most improved state: but in the Gentle Shepherd it is often debased by a phraseology not to be met with, except among the most illiterate people. Writers on pastoral have not always been careful to distinguish between coarseness and simplicity: and yet a plain suit of clothes and a bundle of rags are not more different.

not help being of this opinion, though I have not time at present to specify my reasons. In fact, though mediocrity of execution in poetry be allowed to deserve the doom pronounced upon it by Horace; * yet it is true, notwithstanding, that in this art, as in many other good things, the point of excellence lies in a middle between two extremes; and has been reached by those only who sought to improve nature as far as the genius of their work would permit, keeping at an equal distance from rusticity on the one hand, and affected elegance on the other.

If it were asked, what effects a view of nature degraded or rendered less perfect than the reality, would produce in poetry; I should answer, the same which caricatura produces in painting; it would make the piece ludicrous. In almost every countenance there are some exceptionable features, by heightening the deformity whereof, it is easy to give a ridiculous likeness even of a good face. And in most human characters there are blemishes, moral, intellectual, or corporeal, by exaggerating which *to a certain degree*, you may form a comick character; as by raising the virtues, abilities, or external advantages of individuals, you form epick or tragick characters. I

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 373.

say, *to a certain degree;* for if, by their vices, want of understanding, or bodily infirmities, they should raise disgust, pity, or any other important emotion, they are then no longer the objects of comick ridicule; and it is an egregious fault in a writer to attempt to make them so.* It is a fault, because it proves his judgment to be perverted, and tends to pervert the sentiments, and ruin the morals of mankind.

But is nature always degraded in comick performances? I answer, No: neither is it always improved, as we remarked already, in serious poetry. Some human characters are so truly heroick, as to raise admiration, without any heightenings of poetical art; and some are so truly laughable, that the comick writer would have nothing to do, but to represent them as they are. Besides, to raise laughter is not always the aim, either of epick comedy,† or of the dramatick: sublime passions and characters are sometimes introduced; and these may be heightened as much as the poet finds necessary for his purpose, provided that, in his style, he affect no heroical ele-

* See Essay on Laughter, chap. 3.

† Of the epick comedy, which might perhaps be called rather the *comick epopee*, *Tom Jones* and *Amelia* are examples.

vation; and that his action, and the rank of his persons, be such as might probably be met with in common life. In regard to fable, and the order of events, all comedy requires, or at least admits, as great perfection as epick poetry itself.

CHAPTER VI.

Remarks on Musick.

SECTION I.

Of Imitation. Is Musick an Imitative Art?

MAN from his birth is prone to imitation, and takes great pleasure in it. At a time when he is too young to understand or attend to rules, he learns, by imitating others, to speak, and walk, and do many other things equally requisite to life and happiness. Most of the sports of children are imitative, and many of them dramatical. Mimickry occasions laughter; and a just imitation of human life upon the stage is highly delightful to persons of all ranks, conditions, and capacities.

Our natural propensity to imitation may in part account for the pleasure it yields: for that is always pleasing which gratifies natural propensity; nay, to please, and to gratify, are almost synonymous terms. Yet the peculiar charm of imitation may also be accounted for upon other principles. To compare a copy with the original, and trace

out the particulars wherein they differ and wherein they resemble, is in itself a pleasing exercise to the mind; and, when accompanied with admiration of the object imitated, and of the genius of the imitator, conveys a most intense delight; which may be rendered still more intense by the agreeable qualities of the *instrument* of imitation, by the beauty of the colours in painting, by the harmony of the language in poetry; and in musick, by the sweetness, mellowness, pathos, and other pleasing varieties of vocal and instrumental sound. And if to all this there be added, the merit of a moral design, imitation will then shine forth in her most amiable form, and the enraptured heart acknowledge her powers of pleasing to be irresistible.

Such is the delight we have in imitation, that what would in itself give neither pleasure nor pain, may become agreeable when well imitated. We see without emotion many faces, and other familiar objects; but a good picture even of a stone, or common plant, is not beheld with indifference. No wonder, then, that what is agreeable in itself, should, when surveyed through the medium of skilful imitation, be highly agreeable. A good portrait of a grim countenance is pleasing; but a portrait equally good of a beautiful one is still more so. Nay,

though a man in a violent passion, a monstrous wild beast, or a body agonized with pain, be a most unpleasing spectacle, a picture, or poetical description of it, may be contemplated with delight;* the pleasure we take in the artist's ingenuity, joined to our consciousness that the object before us is not real, being more than sufficient to counterbalance every disagreeable feeling occasioned by the deformity of the figure.† Even human vices, infirmities, and misfortunes, when well represented on the stage, form a most interesting amusement. So great is the charm of imitation.

* Aristot. Poet. sec. 4. Gerard on Taste, part 1. sec. 4.

† Pictures, however, of great merit as imitations, and valuable for the morality of the design, may yet be too horrid to be contemplated with pleasure. A robber, who had broke into a repository of the dead, in order to plunder a corpse of some rich ornaments, is said to have been so affected with the hideous spectacle of mortality which presented itself when he opened the coffin, that he slunk away, trembling and weeping, without being able to execute his purpose. I have met with an excellent print upon this subject; but was never able to look at it for half a minute together. Too many objects of the same character may be seen in Hogarth's *Progress of Cruelty*. There is another class of shocking ideas, which poets have not always been sufficiently careful to avoid. Juvenal and Swift, and even Pope himself, has given

That has been thought a very mysterious pleasure, which we take in witnessing tragical imitations of human action, even while they move us to pity and sorrow. Several causes seem to cooperate in producing it. 1. It gives an agreeable agitation to the mind, to be deeply interested in any event, that is not attended with real harm to ourselves or others. Nay, certain events of the most substantial distress would seem to give a gloomy entertainment to some minds: else why should men run so eagerly to see shipwrecks, executions, riots, and even battles, and fields of slaughter? But the distress upon the stage neither is, nor is believed to be, real; and therefore the agreeable exercise it may give to the mind is not allayed by any bitter reflections, but is rather heightened by this consideration, that the whole is imaginary. To those who mistake it for real, as children are said to do sometimes, it gives no pleasure, but intense pain. 2. Throughout the performance, we admire the genius of the poet,

us descriptions which it turns one's stomach to think of. And I must confess, that, notwithstanding the authority of Atterbury and Addison, and the general merit of the passage, I could never reconcile myself to some filthy ideas, which, to the unspeakable satisfaction of Mr. Voltaire, Milton has unwarily introduced in the famous allegory of sin and death.

as it appears in the language and sentiments, in the right conduct of the fable, in diversifying and supporting the characters, and in devising incidents affecting in themselves, and conducive to the main design. 3. The ingenuity of the actors must be allowed to be a principal cause of the pleasure with which we witness either tragedy or comedy. A bad play well acted may please, and in fact often does; but a good play ill acted is intolerable. 4. We sympathize with the emotions of the audience, and this heightens our own. For I apprehend, that no person of sensibility would choose to be the sole spectator of a play, if he had it in his power to see it in company with a multitude. When we have read by ourselves a pleasing narrative, till it has lost every charm that novelty can bestow, we may renew its relish by reading it in company, and perhaps be even more entertained than at the first perusal. 5. The ornaments of the theatre, the musick, the scenery, the splendour of the company, nay the very dress of the players, must be allowed to contribute something to our amusement: else why do managers expend so much money in decoration? And lastly, let it be observed, that there is something very peculiar in the nature of pity. The pain, however exquisite, that accompanies this amiable affection, is such, that a man of a generous mind would not disqualify himself for it, even if he could:

nor is the "luxury of woe," that we read of in poetry, a mere figure of speech, but a real sensation, wherewith every person of humanity is acquainted, by frequent experience. Pity produces a tenderness of heart very friendly to virtuous impressions. It inclines us to be circumspect and lowly, and sensible of the uncertainty of human things, and of our dependence upon the great Author of our being; while continued joy and prosperity harden the heart, and render men proud, irreligious, and inattentive: so that Solomon had good reason for affirming, that "by the sadness "of the countenance the heart is made better." The exercise of pity, even towards imaginary sufferings, cannot fail to give pleasure, if attended, as it generally is, with the approbation of reason and conscience, declaring it to be a virtuous affection, productive of signal benefit to society, and peculiarly suitable to our condition, honourable to our nature, and amiable in the eyes of our fellow creatures.*

Since imitation is so plentiful a source of pleasure, we need not wonder, that the imitative arts of poetry and painting should have been greatly esteemed in every enlightened age. The imitation

* Since these remarks were written, Dr. Campbell has published a very accurate and ingenious dissertation on this subject. See his *Philosophy of Rhetorick*

itself, which is the work of the artist, is agreeable; the thing imitated, which is nature, is also agreeable; and is not the same thing true of the instrument of imitation? Or does any one doubt, whether harmonious language be pleasing to the ear, or certain arrangements of colour beautiful to the eye?

Shall I apply these, and the preceding reasonings, to the musical art also, which I have elsewhere called, and which is generally understood to be, imitative? Shall I say, that some melodies please, because they imitate nature, and that others, which do not imitate nature, are therefore unpleasing? that an air expressive of devotion, for example, is agreeable, because it presents us with an imitation of those sounds by which devotion does naturally express itself? Such an affirmation would hardly pass upon the reader; notwithstanding the plausibility it might seem to derive from that strict analogy which all the fine arts are supposed to bear to one another. He would ask, what is the natural sound of devotion? where is it to be heard? when was it heard? what resemblance is there between Handel's *Te Deum*, and the tone of voice natural to a person expressing, by articulate sound, his veneration of the divine character and providence? In fact, I apprehend, that critics have erred a little in their determinations

upon this subject, from an opinion, that musick, painting, and poetry are all imitative arts. I hope at least I may say, without offence, that while this was my opinion, I was always conscious of some unaccountable confusion of thought, whenever I attempted to explain it in the way of detail to others.

But while I thus insinuate, that musick is not an imitative art, I mean no disrespect to Aristotle, who seems in the beginning of his Poeticks to declare the contrary. It is not the whole, but *the greater part* of musick, which that philosopher calls imitative; and I agree with him so far as to allow this property to some musick, though not to all. But he speaks of the ancient musick, and I of the modern; and to one who considers how very little we know of the former, it will not appear a contradiction to say, that the one might have been imitative, though the other is not.

Nor do I mean any disrespect to musick, when I would strike it off the list of imitative arts. I allow it to be a fine art, and to have great influence on the human soul: I grant, that, by its power of raising a variety of agreeable emotions in the hearer, it proves its relation to poetry, and that it never appears to the best advantage but with poetry for its interpreter: and I am satisfied, that, though musical genius may subsist

without poetical taste, and poetical genius without musical taste; yet these two talents united might accomplish nobler effects than either could do singly. I acknowledge too, that the principles and essential rules of this art are as really founded in nature, as those of poetry and painting. But when I am asked, what part of nature is imitated in any good picture or poem, I find I can give a definite answer: whereas, when I am asked, what part of nature is imitated in Handel's *water musick*, for instance, or in Corelli's *eighth concerto*, or in any particular English song or Scotch tune, I find I can give no definite answer: though no doubt I might say, some plausible things; or perhaps, after much refinement, be able to show, that musick may, by one shift or other, be made an imitative art, provided you allow me to give any meaning I please to the word *imitative*.

Musick is imitative, when it readily puts one in mind of the thing imitated. If an explication be necessary, and if, after all, we find it difficult to recognise any exact similitude, I would not call such musick an imitation of nature; but consider it as upon a footing, in point of likeness, with those pictures, wherein the action cannot be known but by a label proceeding from the mouth of the agent, nor the species of animal ascertained without a name written under it. But

between imitation in musick and imitation in painting, there is this one essential difference: a bad picture is always a bad imitation of nature, and a good picture is necessarily a good imitation; but musick may be exactly imitative, and yet intolerably bad; or not at all imitative, and yet perfectly good. I have heard, that the *pastorale* in the eighth of Corelli's *concertos* (which appears by the inscription to have been composed for the night of the nativity) was intended for an imitation of the song of angels hovering above the fields of Bethlehem, and gradually soaring up to heaven. The musick, however, is not such as would of itself convey this idea: and, even with the help of a commentary, it requires a lively fancy to connect the various movements and melodies of the piece with the motions and evolutions of the heavenly host; as sometimes flying off, and sometimes returning; singing sometimes in one quarter of the sky, and sometimes in another; now in one or two parts, and now in full chorus. It is not clear, that the author intended any imitation; and whether he did or not, is a matter of no consequence; for the musick will continue to please, when the tradition is no more remembered. The harmonies of this *pastorale* are indeed so uncommon, and so ravishingly sweet, that it is almost impossible not to think

of heaven when one hears them. I would not call them imitative; but I believe they are finer than any imitative musick in the world.

Sounds in themselves can imitate nothing directly but sounds, nor in their motions any thing but motions. But the natural sounds and motions that musick is allowed to imitate, are but few. For, first, they must all be consistent with the fundamental principles of the art, and not repugnant either to melody or to harmony. Now, the foundation of all true musick, and the most perfect of all musical instruments, is the human voice; which is therefore the prototype of the musical scale, and a standard of musical sound. Noises, therefore, and inharmonious notes of every kind, which a good voice cannot utter without straining, ought to be excluded from this pleasing art: for it is impossible, that those vocal sounds which require any unnatural efforts, either of the singer or speaker, should ever give permanent gratification to the hearer. I say permanent gratification; for I deny not, that the preternatural screams of an Italian singer may occasion surprise, and momentary amusement: but those screams are not musick; they are admired, not for their propriety or pathos, but, like ropedancing, and the eating of fire, merely because they are uncommon and difficult. Besides, the end of all genuine musick is, to introduce

into the human mind certain affections, or susceptibilities of affection. Now, all the affections, over which musick has any power, are of the agreeable kind. And therefore, in this art, no imitations of natural sound or motion, but such as tend to inspire agreeable affections, ought ever to find a place. The song of certain birds, the murmur of a stream, the shouts of multitudes, the tumult of a storm, the roar of thunder, or a chime of bells, are sounds connected with agreeable or sublime affections, and reconcilable both with melody and with harmony; and may therefore be imitated, when the artist has occasion for them: but the crowing of cocks, the barking of dogs, the mewing of cats, the grunting of swine, the gabbling of geese, the cackling of a hen, the braying of an ass, the creaking of a saw, or the rumbling of a cartwheel, would render the best musick ridiculous. The movement of a dance may be imitated, or the stately pace of an embattled legion; but the hobble of a trotting horse would be intolerable.

There is another sort of imitation by sound, which ought never to be heard, or seen, in musick. To express the local elevation of objects by what *we* call *high* notes, and their depression by *low* or *deep* notes, has no more propriety in it, than any other pun. *We* call notes *high* or *low*, with respect of their situation in the written

scale. There would have been no absurdity in expressing the highest notes by characters placed at the bottom of the scale or musical line, and the lowest notes by characters placed at the top of it, if custom or accident had so determined. And there is reason to think, that something like this actually obtained in the musical scale of the ancients. At least it is probable, that the deepest or gravest sound was called *summa* by the Romans, and the shrillest or acutest *ima;* which might be owing to the construction of their instruments; the string that sounded the former being perhaps highest in place, and that which sounded the latter lowest. Yet some people would think a song faulty, if the word *heaven* was set to what we call a *low* note, or the word *hell* to what we call a *high* one.

All these sorts of illicit imitation have been practised, and by those too from whom better things were expected. This abuse of a noble art did not escape the satire of Swift; who, though deaf to the charms of musick, was not blind to the absurdity of musicians. He recommended it to Dr. Echlin, an ingenious gentleman of Ireland, to compose a *cantata* in ridicule of this puerile mimickry. Here we have *motions* imitated, which are the most inharmonious, and the least connected with human affections; as the *trotting*, *ambling*, and *galloping*, of Pegasus; and

sounds the most unmusical, as *crackling*, and *sniveling*, and *rough roystering rustick roaring strains:* the words *high* and *deep* have high and deep notes set to them; a series of short notes of equal lengths are introduced, to imitate *shivering* and *shaking;* an irregular rant of quick sounds, to express *rambling;* a sudden rise of the voice, from a low to a high pitch, to denote *flying above the sky;* a ridiculous run of chromatick divisions on the words *Celia dies;* with other droll contrivances of a like nature. In a word, Swift's cantata alone may convince any person, that musick uniformly imitative would be ridiculous. I just observe in passing, that the satire of this piece is levelled, not at absurd imitation only, but also at some other musical improprieties, such as the idle repetition of the same words, the running of long extravagant divisions upon one syllable, and the setting of words to musick that have no meaning.

If I were entitled to suggest any rules in this art, I would humbly propose, (and a great musician and ingenious writer seems to be of the same mind)* that no imitation should ever be introduced into musick purely instrumental. Of vocal melody the expression is, or ought to be,

* Avison on Musical Expression, p. 57. 60. second edit.

ascertained by the poetry; but the expression of the best instrumental musick is ambiguous. In this, therefore, there is nothing to lead the mind of the hearer to recognise the imitation, which, though both legitimate and accurate, would run the risk of being overlooked and lost. If, again, it were so very exact, as to lead our thoughts instantly to the thing imitated, we should be apt to attend to the imitation only, so as to remain insensible to the general effect of the piece. In a word, I am inclined to think, that imitation in an instrumental *concerto* would produce either no effect, or a bad one. The same reasons would exclude it from instrumental *solos;* provided they were such as deserve to be called musick: if they be contrived only to show the dexterity of the performer, imitations, and all possible varieties of sound, may be thrown in *ad libitum;* any thing will do, that can astonish the audience; but to such fiddling or fingering I would no more give the honourable name of musick, than I would apply that of poetry to Pope's " Fluttering spread " thy purple pinions," or to Swift's ode on *Dilton and Whiston.*

In vocal musick, truly such, the words render the expression determinate, and fix the hearer's attention upon it. Here, therefore, legitimate imitations may be employed; both because the

subject of the song will render them intelligible, and because the attention of the hearer is in no danger of being seduced from the principal air. Yet even here, these imitations must be laid upon the instrumental accompaniment, and by no means attempted by the singer, unless they are expressive, and musical, and may be easily managed by the voice. In the song, which is the principal part, expression should be predominant, and imitations never used at all, except to assist the expression. Besides, the tones of the human voice, though the most pathetick of all sounds, are not suited to the quirks of imitative melody, which will always appear to best advantage on an instrument. In the first part of that excellent song, " Hide me from day's gairish eye, " While the bee with honey'd thigh " At her " flowery work does sing, " And the waters mur- " muring, " With such concert as they keep, " Intice the dewy feather'd sleep," Handel imitates the murmur of groves and waters by the accompaniment of tenours: in another song of the same *Oratorio*, " On a plat of rising ground " I hear the far off curfew sound, " Over some " wide water'd shore, " Swinging slow with " sullen roar," he makes the bass imitate the evening bell: in another fine song, " Hush, ye " pretty warbling choir," he accompanies the

voice with a flageolet that imitates the singing of birds: in the "Sweet bird that shun'st the noise "of folly," the chief accompaniment is a German flute imitating occasionally the notes of the nightingale. Sometimes, where expression and imitation happen to coincide, and the latter is easily managed by the voice, he makes the song itself imitative. Thus, in that song, "Let the merry "bells ring round, "And the jocund rebecks "sound, "To many a youth and many a maid, "Dancing in the chequer'd shade," he makes the voice in the beginning imitate the *sound* of a chime of bells, and in the end the *motion* and gaiety of a dance.

Of these imitations no body will question the propriety. But Handel, notwithstanding his inexhaustible invention, and wonderful talents in the sublime and pathetick, is subject to fits of trifling, and frequently errs in the application of his imitative contrivances. In that song, "What passion "cannot musick raise and quell," when he comes to the words, "His listening brethren stood "around, "And wondering on their faces *fell*," the accompanying violoncello *falls* suddenly from a quick and *high* movement to a very *deep* and long note. In another song of the same piece,*

* Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day.

" Sharp violins proclaim " Their jealous pangs " and desperation, " Fury, frantick indignation, " *depth* of pains and *height* of passion, " For the " fair disdainful dame;"—the words " *Depth* of " pains and *height* of passion," are thrice repeated to different keys; and the notes of the first clause are constantly *deep*, and those of the second as regularly *high*. The poet however is not less blamable than the musician. And many other examples of the same kind might be produced from the works of this great artist.*

What has been said may serve to show both the extent, and the merit of imitative musick.† It extends to those natural sounds and motions only which are agreeable in themselves, consistent with melody and harmony, and associated with agreeable affections and sentiments. Its merit is so inconsiderable, that musick purely

* That pretty pastoral ode of Shakspeare, " When " daises pied and violets blue," has been set to musick by Mr. Leveridge; who makes the singer imitate, not only the note of the cuckoo, (which may be allowed, because easily performed, and perfectly musical) but also the shriek of the owl.

† By imitative musick I must always be understood to mean, that which imitates *natural* sounds and motions. Fugues, and other similar contrivances, which, like echoes, repeat or imitate particular portions of the melody, it belongs not to this place to consider.

instrumental is rather hurt than improved by it; and vocal musick employs it only as a help to the expression, except in some rare cases, where the imitation is itself expressive as well as agreeable, and at the same time within the power of the human voice.

The best masters lay it down as a maxim, that melody and harmony are not to be deserted, even for the sake of expression itself.* Expression that is not consistent with these is not *musical* expression; and a composer who does not render them consistent, violates the essential rules of his art.†

* Avison on Musical Expression, page 56.

† Harmony and melody are as essential to genuine musick, as perspective is to painting. However solicitous a painter may be to give expression to the figures in his back ground, he must not strengthen their colour, nor define their outlines, so as to hurt the perspective by bringing them too near. A musician will be equally faulty, if he violate the harmony of his piece, in order to heighten the pathos. There is likewise in poetry something analogous to this. In those poems that require a regular and uniform versification, a poet may perhaps, in some rare instances, be allowed to break through the rules of his verse, for the sake of rendering his numbers more emphatical. Milton at least is intitled to take such a liberty:

—— Eternal wrath
Burn'd after them to the bottomless pit.

Parad. Lost.

And

If we compare imitation with expression, the superiority of the latter will be evident. Imitation without expression is nothing: imitation detrimental to expression is faulty: imitation is never tolerable, at least in serious musick, except it promote and be subservient to expression. If then the highest excellence may be obtained in instrumental musick, without imitation; and if, even in vocal musick, imitation have only a secondary merit; it must follow, that the imitation of nature is not essential to this art; though sometimes, when judiciously employed, it may be ornamental.

And Virgil:

> Proluit insano contorquens vortice sylvas
> Fluviorum rex Eridanus.—— *Geor.* i.

And Homer:

Διὰ μεν ἀσπιδος ἦλθε φαεινῆς ὄμβριμον ἔγχος. Iliad iii.

But these licences must not be too glaring: and therefore I know not whether Dyer is not blamable for giving us, in order to render his numbers imitative, a trochaick verse of four feet and a half, instead of an iambick of five:

> The pilgrim oft
> At dead of night midst his oraison hears
> Aghast the voice of Time: disparting towers
> *Tumbling all precipitate, down dash'd,*
> Rattling around, &c. *Ruins of Rome.*

Different passions and sentiments do indeed give different tones and accents to the human voice. But can the tones of the most pathetick melody be said to bear a resemblance to the voice of a man or woman speaking from the impulse of passion? The *flat key*, or *minor mode*, is found to be well adapted to a melancholy subject; and, if I were disposed to refine upon the imitative qualities of the art, I would give this for a reason, that melancholy, by depressing the spirits, weakens the voice, and makes it rise rather by *minor thirds*, which consist of but four semitones, than by *major thirds*, which consist of five. But is not this reason more subtile than solid? Are there not melancholy airs in the *sharp key*, and cheerful ones in the *flat?* Nay, in the same air, do we not often meet with a transition from the one key to the other, without any sensible change in the expression?

Courage is apt to vent itself in a strong tone of voice: but can no musical strains inspire fortitude, but such as are sonorous? The Lacedemonians did not think so; otherwise they would not have used the musick of soft pipes when advancing to battle.* If it be objected, that the firm deliberate valour, which the Spartan musick was intended

* Aulus Gellius, lib. 1. cap. 11.

to inspire, does not express itself in a blustering, but rather in a gentle accent, resembling the musick of soft pipes, I would recommend it to the objector to choose from all the musick he is acquainted with, such an air as he thinks would most effectually awaken his courage; and then consider, how far that animating strain can be said to resemble the accent of a commander complimenting his troops after a victory, or encouraging them before it. Shakspeare speaks of the "spirit-stirring drum;" and a most emphatical epithet it must be allowed to be. But why does the drum excite courage? Is it because the *sound* imitates the voice of a valiant man? or does the *motion* of the drumsticks bear any similitude to that of his legs or arms?

Many christians (I wish I could say *all*) know to their happy experience, that the tones of the organ have a wonderful power in raising and animating devout affections. But will it be said, that there is any resemblance between the sound of that noble instrument, or the finest compositions that can be played on it, and the voice of a human creature employed in an act of worship?

One of the most affecting styles in musick is the *pastoral*. Some airs put us in mind of the country, of "rural sights and rural sounds," and dispose the heart to that cheerful tranquillity,

that pleasing melancholy, that "vernal delight," which groves and streams, flocks and herds, hills and valleys, inspire. But of what are these pastoral airs imitative? Is it of the murmur of waters, the warbling of groves, the lowing of herds, the bleating of flocks, or the echo of vales and mountains? Many airs are pastoral, which imitate none of these things. What then do they imitate? the songs of ploughmen, milkmaids, and shepherds? Yes: they are such as we think we have heard, or might have heard, sung by the inhabitants of the country. Then they must *resemble* country songs; and if so, these songs must also be in the pastoral style. Of what then are these country songs, the supposed archetypes of pastoral musick, imitative? Is it of other country songs? This shifts the difficulty a step backward, but does not by any means take it away. Is it of rural sounds, proceeding from things animated, or from things inanimate? or of rural motions of men, beasts, or birds; of winds, woods, or waters? In a word, an air may be pastoral, and in the highest degree pleasing, which imitates neither sound nor motion, nor any thing else whatever.

After all, it must be acknowledged, that there is some relation at least, or analogy, if not similitude, between certain musical sounds and mental affections. Soft musick may be considered as

analogous to gentle emotions; and loud musick, if the tones are sweet and not too rapid, to sublime ones; and a quick succession of noisy notes, like those we hear from a drum, seems to have some relation to hurry and impetuosity of passion. Sometimes, too, there is from nature, and sometimes there comes to be from custom, a connection between certain musical instruments, and certain places and occasions. Thus a flute, hautboy, or bagpipe, is better adapted to the purposes of rural musick, than a fiddle, organ, or harpsichord, because more portable, and less liable to injury from the weather: thus an organ, on account both of its size and loudness, requires to be placed in a church, or some large apartment: thus violins and violoncellos, to which any degree of damp may prove hurtful, are naturally adapted to domestick use; while drums and trumpets, fifes and Frenchhorns, are better suited to the service of the field. Hence it happens, that particular tones and modes of musick acquire such a connection with particular places, occasions, and sentiments, that by hearing the former we are put in mind of the latter, so as to be affected with them more or less, according to the circumstances. The sound of an organ, for example, puts one in mind of a church, and of the affections suitable to that place; military musick,

of military ideas; and flutes and hautboys, of the thoughts and images peculiar to rural life. This may serve in part to account for musical expressiveness or efficacy; that is, to explain how it comes to pass, that certain passions are raised, or certain ideas suggested, by certain kinds of musick: but this does not prove musick to be an imitative art, in the same sense wherein painting and poetry are called imitative. For between a picture and its original; between the ideas suggested by a poetical description and the objects described, there is a strict similitude: but between soft musick and a calm temper there is no strict similitude; and between the sound of a drum or of an organ and the affection of courage or of devotion, between the musick of flutes and a pastoral life, between a concert of violins and a cheerful company, there is only an accidental connection, formed by custom, and founded rather on the nature of the instruments, than on that of the musick.

It may perhaps be thought, that man learned to sing by imitating the birds; and therefore, as vocal musick is allowed to have been the prototype of instrumental, that the whole art must have been essentially imitative. Granting the fact, this only we could infer from it, that the art was imitative at first: but that it still conti-

nues to be so, does not follow; for it cannot be said, either that the style of our musick resembles that of birds, or that our musical composers make the song of birds the model of their compositions. But it is vain to argue from hypothesis: and the fact before us, though taken for granted by some authors, is destitute of evidence, and plainly absurd. How can it be imagined, that mankind learned to sing by imitating the feathered race? I would as soon suppose that we learned to speak by imitating the neigh of a horse, or to walk by observing the motion of fishes in water; or that the political constitution of Great Britain was formed upon the plan of an ant hillock. Every musician, who is but moderately instructed in the principles of his art, knows, and can prove, that, in the *sharp series* at least, the divisions of the diatonick scale, which is the standard of human musick, are no artificial contrivance, but have a real foundation in nature: but the singing of birds, if we except the cuckoo and one or two more, is not reducible to that scale, nor to any other that was ever invented by man; for birds diversify their notes by intervals which the human organs cannot imitate without unnatural efforts, and which therefore it is not to be supposed that human art will ever attempt to express by written symbols. In a word, it is plain,

that nature intended one kind of musick for men, and another for birds: and we have no more reason to think, that the former was derived by imitation from the latter, than that the nests of a rookery were the prototype of the Gothick architecture, or the combs in a beehive of the Grecian.

Musick, therefore, is pleasing, not because it is imitative, but because certain melodies and harmonies have *an aptitude* to raise certain passions, affections, and sentiments in the soul. And, consequently, the pleasures we derive from melody and harmony are seldom or never resolvable into that delight which the human mind receives from the imitation of nature.

All this, it may be said, is but a dispute about a word. Be it so: but it is, notwithstanding, a dispute somewhat material both to art and to science. It is material, in science, that philosophers have a determined meaning to their words, and that things be referred to their proper classes. And it is of importance to every art, that its design and end be rightly understood, and that artists be not taught to believe that to be essential to it, which is only adventitious, often impertinent, for the most part unnecessary, and at best but ornamental.

SECTION II.

How are the Pleasures we derive from Musick to be accounted for?

It was said, that certain melodies and harmonies have *an aptitude* to raise certain passions, affections, and sentiments, in the human soul. Let us now inquire a little into the nature of this *aptitude;* by endeavouring, from acknowledged principles of the human constitution, to explain the cause of that pleasure which mankind derive from musick. I am well aware of the delicacy of the argument, and of my inability to do it justice; and therefore I promise no complete investigation, nor indeed any thing more than a few cursory remarks. As I have no theory to support, and as this topick, though it may amuse, is not of any great utility, I shall be neither positive in my assertions, nor abstruse in my reasoning.

The vulgar distinguish between the sense of hearing, and that faculty by which we receive pleasure from musick, and which is commonly called *a musical ear*. Every body knows, that to hear, and to have a relish for melody, are two different things; and that many persons have the first in perfection, who are destitute of the last. The last is indeed, like the first, a gift of nature;

and may, like other natural gifts, languish if neglected, and improve exceedingly if exercised. And though every person who hears, might no doubt, by instruction and long experience, be made sensible of the musical properties of sound, so far as to be in some measure gratified with good musick and disgusted with bad; yet both his pain and his pleasure would be very different in kind and degree, from that which is conveyed by a true musical ear.

I. Does not part of the pleasure, both of melody and of harmony, arise from the very nature of the notes that compose it? Certain inarticulate sounds, especially when continued, produce very pleasing effects on the mind. They seem to withdraw the attention from the more tumultuous concerns of life, and, without agitating the soul, to pour gradually upon it a train of softer ideas, that sometimes lull and soothe the faculties, and sometimes quicken sensibility, and stimulate the imagination. Nor is it altogether absurd to suppose, that the human body may be mechanically affected by them. If in a church one feels the floor and the pew tremble to certain tones of the organ; if one string vibrates of its own accord when another is sounded near it of equal length, tension, and thickness; if a person who sneezes, or speaks loud, in the neighbourhood of a harpsi-

chord, often hears the strings of the instrument murmur in the same tone; we need not wonder, that some of the finer fibres of the human frame should be put in a tremulous motion, when they happen to be in unison with any notes proceeding from external objects. That certain bodily pains might be alleviated by certain sounds, was believed by the Greeks and Romans: and we have it on the best authority, that one species at least of madness was once curable by melody.* I have seen even instrumental musick of little expression draw tears from those who had no knowledge of the art, nor any particular relish for it. Nay, a friend of mine, who is profoundly skilled in the theory of musick, well acquainted with the animal economy, and singularly accurate in his inquiries into nature, assures me, that he has been once and again wrought into a feverish fit by the tones of an eolian harp. These, and other similar facts that might be mentioned, are not easily accounted for, unless we suppose, that certain sounds may have a mechanical influence upon certain parts of the human body. Be that however as it will, it admits of no doubt, that the mind may be agreeably affected by mere sound,

* First book of Samuel, chap. xvi. vers. 23

in which there is neither meaning nor modulation; not only by the tones of the eolian harp, and other musical instruments, but also by the murmur of winds, groves, and waterfalls;* nay by the shouts of multitudes, by the uproar of the ocean in a storm; and when one can listen to it without fear, by that "deep and dreadful organ pipe," the thunder itself.

Nothing is more valued in a musical instrument or performer, than sweetness, fulness, and variety of tone. Sounds are disagreeable, which hurt the ear by their shrillness, or which cannot be heard without painful attention on account of their exility. But *loud* and *mellow* sounds, like those of thunder, of a storm, and of the full organ, elevate the mind through the ear; even as vast magnitude yields a pleasing astonishment, when contemplated by the eye. By suggesting the idea of great power, and sometimes of great expansion too, they excite a pleasing admiration, and seem to accord with the lofty genius of that soul whose chief desire is for truth, virtue, and immortality, and the object of whose most de-

* Quæ tibi, quæ tali reddam pro carmine dona?
Nam neque me tantum venientis sibilus austri,
Nec percussa juvant fluctu tam littora, nec quæ
Saxosas inter decurrunt flumina valles.

Virg. Eclog. 5

lightful meditation is the greatest and best of beings.* *Sweetness* of tone, and beauty of shape and colour, produce a placid acquiescence of mind, accompanied with some degree of joy, which plays in a gentle smile upon the countenance of the hearer and beholder. *Equable* sounds, like smooth and level surfaces, are in general more pleasing than such as are rough, uneven, or interrupted; yet, as the flowing curve, so essential to elegance of figure, and so conspicuous in the outlines of beautiful animals, is delightful to the eye; so notes *gradually swelling*, and *gradually decaying*, have an agreeable effect on the ear, and on the mind; the former tending to rouse the faculties, and the latter to compose them; the one promoting gentle exercise, and the other rest.

But of all sounds, that which makes its way most directly to the human heart, is the human voice: and those instruments that approach nearest to it are in expression the most pathetick, and in tone the most perfect. The notes of a man's voice, well tuned and well managed, have a mellowness, variety and energy, beyond those of any instrument; and a fine female voice, modulated by sensibility, is beyond comparison the

* See Longinus, sect. 34. Spectator, No. 413. Pleasures of Imagination, book 1. vers. 151. &c.

sweetest, and most melting sound, in art or nature. Is it not strange, that the most musical people upon earth, dissatisfied, as it would seem, with both these, should have incurred a dreadful reproach, in order to introduce a third species of vocal sound, that has not the perfection of either? For may it not be affirmed with truth, that no person of uncorrupted taste ever heard for the first time the musick I allude to, without some degree of horrour; proceeding not only from the disagreeable ideas suggested by what was before his eyes, but also from the thrilling sharpness of tone that startled his ear? Let it not be said, that by this abominable expedient, choruses are rendered more complete, and melodies executed, which before were impracticable. Nothing that shocks humanity ought to have a place in human art; nor can a good ear be gratified with unnatural sound, or a good taste with too intricate composition. Surely, every lover of musick, and of mankind, would wish to see a practice abolished which is in itself a disgrace to both; and, in its consequences, so far from being desirable, that it cannot truly be said to do any thing more than to debase a noble art into trick and grimace, and make the human breath a vehicle, not to human sentiments, but to mere empty screaming and squalling.

II. Some notes, when sounded together, have an agreeable, and others a disagreeable effect. The former are *concords*, the latter *discords*. When the fluctuations of air produced by two or more contemporary notes do mutually coincide, the effect is agreeable; when they mutually repel each other, the effect is disagreeable. These coincidences are not equally perfect; nor these repulsions equally strong; and therefore all concords are not equally sweet, nor all discords equally harsh. A man unskilled in musick might imagine, that the most agreeable harmony* must be made up of the sweetest concords, without any mixture of discord: and in like manner, a child might fancy, that a feast of sweetmeats would prove the most delicious banquet. But both would be mistaken. The same concord may be more or less pleasing, according to its position; and the sweeter concords often produce their best effect, when they are introduced by the harsher ones, or even by discords: for then they are most agreeable, because they give the greatest relief to the ear: even as health is doubly delightful af-

* *Melody*, in the language of art, is the agreeable effect of a single series of musical tones: *harmony* is the agreeable effect of two or more series of musical tones sounded at the same time.

ter sickness, liberty after confinement, and a sweet taste when preceded by a bitter. Dissonance, therefore, is necessary to the perfection of harmony. But consonance predominates; and to such a degree, that, except on rare occasions, and by a nice ear, the discord in itself is hardly perceptible.

Musicians have taken pains to discover the principles on which concords and discords ought to be so arranged as to produce the best effect; and have thus brought the whole art of harmony within the compass of a certain number of rules, some of which are more, and others less indispensable. These rules admit not of demonstrative proof: for though some of them may be inferred by rational deduction from the very nature of sound; yet the supreme judge of their propriety is the human ear. They are, however, founded on observation so accurate and so just, that no artist ever thought of calling them in question. Rousseau indeed somewhere insinuates, that habit and education might give us an equal relish for a different system of harmony; a sentiment which I should not have expected from an author, who for the most part recommends an implicit confidence in our natural feelings, and who certainly understands human nature well, and

musick better than any other philosopher. That a bass of *sevenths* or *fourths*, or even of *fifths*, should ever become so agreeable to any human ear, as one constructed according to the present system, is to me as inconceivable, as that Virgil, though turned into rugged prose, would be read and admired as much as ever. Rousseau could not mean to extend this remark to the whole system, but only to some of its mechanical rules: and indeed it must be allowed, that in this, as well as in other arts, there are rules which have no better foundation than fashion, or the practice of some eminent composer.

Natural sensibility is not taste, though it be necessary to it. A painter discovers both blemishes and beauties in a picture, in which an ordinary eye can perceive neither. In poetical language, and in the arrangement and choice of words, there are many niceties, whereof they only are conscious who have practised versification, as well as studied the works of poets, and the rules of the art. In like manner, harmony must be studied a little in its principles by every person who would acquire a true relish for it; and nothing but practice will ever give that quickness to his ear which is necessary to enable him to enter with adequate satisfaction, or rational dislike, into the merits or demerits of a

musical performance. When once he can attend to the progress, relations, and dependencies, of the several parts; and remember the past, and anticipate the future, at the same time he perceives the present: so as to be sensible of the skill of the composer, and dexterity of the performer; a regular concerto, well executed, will yield him high entertainment, even though its regularity be its principal recommendation. The pleasure which an untutored hearer derives from it is far inferiour: and yet there is something in harmony that pleases, and in dissonance that offends, every ear; and were a piece to be played consisting wholly of discords, or put together without any regard to rule, I believe no person whatever would listen to it without great disgust.

After what has been briefly said of the agreeable qualities of musical notes, it will not seem strange, that a piece, either of melody or of harmony, of little or no expression, should, when elegantly performed, give some delight; not only to adepts, who can trace out the various contrivances of the composer, but even to those who have little or no skill in this art, and must therefore look upon the whole piece as nothing more than a combination of pleasing sounds.

III. But pathos, or expression, is the chief ex-

cellence of musick. Without this, it may amuse the ear, it may give a little exercise to the mind of the hearer, it may for a moment withdraw the attention from the anxieties of life, it may show the performer's dexterity, the skill of the composer, or the merit of the instruments; and in all or any of these ways, it may afford a slight pleasure: but, without engaging the affections, it can never yield that permanent, useful, and heartfelt gratification, which legislators, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, have expected from it. Is it absurd to ascribe utility, and permanence, to the effects produced by this noble art? Let me expatiate a little in its praise. Did not one of the wisest and least voluptuous, of all ancient legislators, give great encouragement to musick?* Does not a most judicious author ascribe the humanity of the Arcadians to the influence of this art, and the barbarity of their neighbours the Cynethians to their neglect of it.† Does not Montesquieu, one of the first names in modern philosophy, prefer it to all other amusements, as being that which least corrupts the soul?‡ Quintilian is very copious in the praise of musick; and extols it as an incentive to valour, as an instrument of moral and

* Lycurgus. See Plutarch. † Polybius. Hist. lib. 4.
‡ Esprit des Loix, liv. 4. ch. 8.

intellectual discipline, as an auxiliary to science, as an object of attention to the wisest men, and a source of comfort and an assistant in labour, even to the meanest.* The heroes of ancient Greece were ambitious to excel in musick; and it is recorded of Themistocles, as something extraordinary, that he was not. Socrates appears to have had checks of conscience for neglecting to accomplish himself in this art; for he tells Cebes, a little before he swallowed the deadly draught, that he had all his life been haunted with a dream, in which one seemed to say to him, "O Socrates, "compose and practise musick;" in compliance with which admonition he amused himself while under sentence of death, with turning some of Esop's fables into verse, and making a hymn in honour of Apollo, the only sort of harmonious compositions that was then in his power.† In armies, musick has always been cultivated as a source of pleasure, a principle of regular motion, and an incentive to valour and enthusiasm. The Son of Sirach declares the ancient poets and musicians to be worthy of honour, and ranks them with the benefactors of mankind.‡ Nay, Jesus Christ and his apostles were pleased to introduce

* Inst. Orat. lib. 1. cap. 8. † Plat. Phædon sect. 4.
‡ Ecclesiasticus, xliv. 1—8

this art into the christian worship; and the church has in every age followed the example.

Musick, however, would not have recommended itself so effectually to general esteem, if it had always been merely instrumental. For, if I mistake not, the expression of musick without poetry is vague and ambiguous; and hence it is, that the same air may sometimes be repeated to every stanza of a long ode or ballad. The change of the poet's ideas, provided the subject continue nearly the same, does not always require a change of the musick: and if criticks have ever determined otherwise, they were led into the mistake, by supposing, what every musician knows to be absurd, that, in fitting verses to a tune, or a tune to verses, it is more necessary, that *particular words* should have *particular notes* adapted to them, than that the *general tenor* of the musick should accord with the *general nature* of the sentiments.

It is true, that to a favourite air, even when unaccompanied with words, we do commonly annex certain ideas, which may have come to be related to it in consequence of some accidental associations: and sometimes we imagine a resemblance (which however is merely imaginary) between certain melodies and certain thoughts or objects. Thus a Scotchman may fancy, that

there is some sort of likeness between that charming air which he calls *Tweedside*, and the scenery of a fine pastoral country: and to the same air, even when played on an instrument, he may annex the ideas of romantick love and rural tranquillity; because these form the subject of a pretty little ode, which he has often heard sung to that air. But all this is the effect of habit. A foreigner, who hears that tune for the first time, entertains no such fancy. The utmost we can expect from him is, to acknowledge the air to be sweet and simple. He would smile, if we were to ask him, whether it bears any resemblance to the hills, groves, and meadows, adjoining to a beautiful river; nor would he perhaps think it more expressive of romantick love, than of conjugal, parental, or filial affection, tender melancholy, moderate joy, or any other gentle passion. Certain it is, that on any one of these topicks, an ode might be composed, which would suit the air most perfectly. So ambiguous is musical expression.

It is likewise true, that musick merely instrumental does often derive significancy from external circumstances. When an army in battle array is advancing to meet the enemy, words are not necessary to give meaning to the military musick. And a solemn air on the organ, introducing or

dividing the church service, may not only elevate the mind, and banish impertinent thoughts, but also deriving energy from the surrounding scene, may promote religious meditation.

Nor can it be denied, that instrumental musick may both quicken our sensibility, and give a direction to it; that is, may both prepare the mind for being affected, and determine it to one set of affections rather than another; to melancholy, for instance, rather than merriment, composure rather than agitation, devotion rather than levity, and contrariwise. Certain tunes, too, there are, which, having been always connected with certain actions, do, merely from the power of habit, dispose men to those actions. Such are the tunes commonly used to regulate the motions of dancing.

Yet it is in general true, that poetry is the most immediate and most accurate interpreter of musick. Without this auxiliary, a piece of the best musick, heard for the first time, might be said to mean something, but we should not be able to say what. It might incline the heart to sensibility: but poetry, or language, would be necessary to improve that sensibility into a real emotion, by fixing the fancy upon some definite and affecting ideas. A fine instrumental symphony well performed, is like an oration delivered

with propriety, but in an unknown tongue; it may affect us a little, but conveys no determinate feeling; we are alarmed perhaps, or melted, or soothed, but it is very imperfectly, because we know not why: the singer, by taking up the same air, and applying words to it, immediately translates the oration into our own language; then all uncertainty vanishes, the fancy is filled with determinate ideas, and determinate emotions take possession of the heart.

A great part of our fashionable musick seems intended rather to tickle and astonish the hearers, than to inspire them with any permanent emotions. And if that be the end of the art, then, to be sure, this fashionable musick is just what it should be, and the simpler strains of former ages are good for nothing. Nor am I now at leisure to inquire, whether it be better for an audience to be thus tickled and astonished, than to have their fancy impressed with beautiful images, and their hearts melted with tender passions, or elevated with sublime ones. But if you grant me this one point, that musick is more or less perfect, in proportion as it has more or less power over the heart, it will follow, that all musick merely instrumental, and which does not derive significancy from any of the associations, habits or outward circumstances, above mentioned, is to a certain degree

imperfect; and that while the rules hinted at in the following queries are overlooked by composers and performers, vocal musick, though it may astonish mankind, or afford them a slight gratification, will never be attended with those important effects that we know it produced of old in the days of simplicity and true taste.

1. Is not good musick set to bad poetry as unexpressive, and therefore as absurd, as good poetry set to bad musick, or as harmonious language without meaning? Yet the generality of musicians appear to be indifferent in regard to this matter. If the sound of the words be good, or the meaning of particular words agreeable; if there be a competency of hills and rills, doves and loves, fountains and mountains, with a tolerable collection of garlands and lambkins, nymphs and cupids, *bergeres* and *tortorellas*, they are not solicitous about sense or elegance. In which they seem to me to consult their own honour as little as the rational entertainment of others. For what is there to elevate the mind of that composer, who condemns himself to set musick to insipid doggerel? Handel's genius never soared to heaven, till it caught strength and fire from the strains of inspiration. 2. Should not the words of every song be intelligible to those to whom it is addressed, and be distinctly articulated, so as to be heard

as plainly as the notes? Or can the human mind be rationally gratified with that which it does not perceive, or which, if it did perceive, it would not understand? And therefore, is not the musick of a song faulty, when it is so complex as to make the distinct articulation of the words impracticable? 3. If the singer's voice and words ought to be heard in every part of the song, can there be any propriety in noisy accompaniments? And as every performer in a numerous band is not perfectly discreet, and as some performers may be more careful to distinguish themselves than do justice to the song, will not an instrumental accompaniment be almost necessarily too noisy, if it is complex? 4. Does not the frequent repetion of the same words in a song, confound its meaning, and distract the attention of both the singer and the hearer? And are not long winded divisions (or successions of notes warbled to one syllable) attended with a like inconvenience, and with this additional bad effect, that they disqualify the voice for expression, by exhausting it? Is not simplicity as great a perfection in musick, as in painting and poetry? Or should we admire that orator who chose to express by five hundred words, a sentiment that might be more emphatically conveyed in five? 5. Ought not the singer to bear in mind, that he has sentiments to

utter as well as sounds? And if so, should he not perfectly understand what he says, as well as what he sings; and not only modulate his notes with the art of a musician, but also pronounce his words with the propriety of a publick speaker? If he is taught to do this, does he not learn of course to avoid all grimace and finical gesticulation? And will he not then acquit himself in singing like a rational creature, and a man of sense? Whereas by pursuing a contrary conduct, is he not to be considered rather as a puppet or wind instrument, than as an elegant artist? 6. Is not church musick more important than any other? and ought it not for that reason to be most intelligible and expressive? But will this be the case, if the notes are drawn out to such an immoderate length, that the words of the singer cannot be understood? Besides, does not excessive slowness, in singing or speaking, tend rather to wear out the spirits, than to elevate the fancy, or warm the heart? It would seem, then, that the vocal part of church musick should never be so slow as to fatigue those who sing, or to render the words of the song in any degree unintelligible to those who hear. 7. Do flourished cadences, whether by a voice or instrument, serve any other purpose, than to take off our attention from the subject,

and set us a staring at the flexibility of the performer's voice, the swiftness of his fingers, or the sound of his fiddle? And if this be their only use, do they not counteract, instead of promoting, the chief end of musick? What should we think, if a tragedian, at the conclusion of every scene, or of every speech, in Othello, were to strain his throat into a preternatural scream, make a hideous wry face, or cut a caper four feet high? We might wonder at the strength of his voice, the pliancy of his features, or the springiness of his limbs; but should hardly admire him as intelligent in his art, or respectful to his audience.

But is it not agreeable to hear a *florid song* by a fine performer, though now and then the voice should be drowned amidst the accompaniments, and though the words should not be understood by the hearers, or even by the singer? I answer, that nothing can be very agreeable, which brings disappointment. In the case supposed, the tones of the voice might no doubt give pleasure: but from instrumental musick we expect something more, and from vocal musick a great deal more, than mere sweetness of sound. From poetry and musick united we have a right to expect pathos, sentiment, and melody, and in a word every gratification that the tuneful art can bestow. But in sweetness of tone the best singer is not superi

our, and scarcely equal, to an eolian harp, to Vischer's hautboy, or to Giardini's violin. And can we without dissatisfaction see a human creature dwindle into mere wood and catgut? Can we be gratified with what only tickles the ear, when we had reason to hope, that a powerful address would have been made to the heart? A handsome actress walking on the stage would no doubt be looked at with complacency for a minute or two, though she were not to speak a word. But surely we had a right to expect a different sort of entertainment; and were her silence to last a few minutes longer, I believe the politest audience in Europe would let her know that they were offended. To conclude: a song, which we listen to without understanding the words, is like a picture seen at too great a distance. The former may be allowed to charm the ear with sweet sounds, in the same degree in which the latter pleases the eye with beautiful colours. But, till the design of the whole, and the meaning of each part, be made obvious to sense, it is impossible to derive any rational entertainment from either.

I hope I have given no offence to the connoisseur by these observations. They are dictated by a hearty zeal for the honour of an art, of which I have heard and seen enough to be satisfied, that

it is capable of being improved into an instrument of virtue, as well as of pleasure. If I did not think so, I should hardly have taken the trouble to write these remarks, slight as they are, upon the philosophy of it. But to return:

Every thing in art, nature, or common life, must give delight, which communicates delightful passions to the human mind. And because all the passions that musick can inspire are of the agreeable kind, it follows, that all pathetick or expressive musick must be agreeable. Musick may inspire devotion, fortitude, compassion, benevolence, tranquillity; it may infuse a gentle sorrow that softens, without wounding, the heart; or a sublime horrour that expands, and elevates, while it astonishes, the imagination: but musick has no expression for impiety, cowardice, cruelty, hatred or discontent. For every essential rule of the art tends to produce pleasing combinations of sound; and it is difficult to conceive, how from these any painful or criminal affections should arise. I believe, however, it might be practicable, by means of harsh tones, irregular rhythm, and continual dissonance, to work the mind into a disagreeable state, and to produce horrible thoughts, and criminal propensity, as well as painful sensations. But this would not be mu-

sick; nor can it ever be for the interest of any society to put such a villanous art in practice.

Milton was so sensible of the moral tendency of musical expression, that he ascribes to it the power of raising some praiseworthy emotions even in the devils themselves.* Would Dryden, if he had been an adept in this art, as Milton was, have made the song of Timotheus inflame Alexander to revenge and cruelty? At any rate, I am well pleased that Dryden fell into this mistake (if it be one,) because it has produced some of the most animated lines that ever were written.† And I am also pleased to find for the honour of musick, and of this criticism, that history ascribes the burning of Persepolis, not to any of the tuneful tribe, but to the instigation of a drunken harlot.

IV. Is there not reason to think, that variety and simplicity of structure may contribute something to the agreeableness of musick, as well as of poetry and prose. Variety, kept within due bounds, cannot fail to please, because it refreshes the mind with perpetual novelty; and is therefore studiously sought after in all the arts, and in none of them more than in musick. To give this

* Paradise Lost, b. 1. vers. 549—562.

† Alexander's Feast, stanza 6.

character to his compositions, the poet varies his phraseology and syntax; and the feet, the pauses, and the sound of contiguous verses, as much as the subject, the language, and the laws of versification will permit: and the prose writer combines longer with shorter sentences in the same paragraph, longer with shorter clauses in the same sentence, and even longer with shorter words in the same clause; terminates contiguous clauses and sentences by a different cadence, and constructs them by a different syntax; and in general avoids all monotony and similar sounds, except where they are unavoidable, or where they may contribute (as indeed they often do) to energy or perspicuity. The musician diversifies his *melody*, by changing his keys; by deferring or interrupting his cadences; by a mixture of slower and quicker, higher and lower, softer and louder notes; and, in pieces of length, by altering the rhythm, the movement, and the air: and his *harmony* he varies, by varying his concords and discords, by a change of modulation, by contrasting the ascent or slower motion of one part to the descent or quicker motion of another, by assigning different harmonies to the same melody, or different melodies to the same harmony, and by many other contrivances.

Simplicity makes musick, as well as language,

intelligible and expressive. It is in every work of art a recommendatory quality. In musick it is indispensable; for we are never pleased with that musick which we cannot understand, or which seems to have no meaning. Of the ancient musick little more is known, than that it was very affecting and very simple. All popular and favourite airs; all that remains of the old national musick in every country; all military marches, church tunes, and other compositions that are more immediately addressed to the heart, and intended to please the general taste; all proverbial maxims of morality and prudence, and all those poetical phrases and lines, which every body remembers, and is occasionally repeating, are remarkable for simplicity. To which we may add, that language, while it improves in simplicity, grows still more and more perfect: and that, as it loses this character, it declines in the same proportion from the standard of elegance, and draws nearer and nearer to utter depravation.* Without simplicity, the varieties of art, instead of pleasing, would only bewilder the attention, and confound the judgment.

Rhythm, or number, is in musick a copious source of both variety and uniformity. Not to

* See *Le Vicende della Litteratura del. Sig. Carlo Denina.*

enter into any nice speculation on the nature of rhythm,* (for which this is not a proper place) I shall only observe, that notes, as united in musick, admit of the distinction of quick and slow, as well as of acute and grave; and that on the former distinction depends what is here called *rhythm*. It is the only thing in a tune which the drum can imitate. And by that instrument, the rhythm of any tune may be imitated most perfectly, as well as by the sound of the feet in dancing: only as the feet can hardly move so quick as the drumsticks, the dancer may be obliged to repeat his strokes at longer intervals, by supposing the musick divided into larger portions; to give one stroke, for example, where the drummer might give two or three, or two where the other would give four or six. For every piece of regular musick is supposed to be divided into small portions (separated in writing by a cross line called a *bar*) which, whether they contain more or fewer notes, are all equal in respect of time. In this way, the rhythm is a source of *uniformity*; which pleases, by suggesting the agreeable ideas of regularity and skill, and, still more, by render-

* The nature of rhythm, and the several divisions of it, are very accurately explained by the learned author of an *Essay on the Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. 2. p. 301.

ing the musick intelligible. It also pleases, by raising and gratifying expectation: for if the movement of the piece were governed by no rule; if what one hears of it during the present moment were in all respects unlike and incommensurable to what one was to hear the next, and had heard the last, the whole would be a mass of confusion; and the ear would either be bewildered, having nothing to rest upon, and nothing to anticipate; or, if it should expect any stated *ratio* between the motion and the time, would be disappointed when it found that there was none. That rhythm is a source of very great *variety*, every person must be sensible who knows only the names of the musical notes, with such of their divisions and subdivisions as relate to time; or who has attended to the manifold varieties of quick and slow motion, which the drum is capable of producing.

As order and proportion are always delightful, it is no wonder that mankind should be agreeably affected with the rhythm of musick. That they are, the universal use of dancing, and of "the spirit-stirring drum," is a sufficient evidence. Nay, I have known a child imitate the rhythm of tunes before he could speak, and long before he could manage his voice so as to imitate their melody; which is a proof, that human na-

ture is susceptible of this delight previously to the acquirement of artificial habits.

V. I hinted at the power of accidental association in giving significancy to musical compositions. It may be remarked further, that association contributes greatly to heighten their agreeable effect. We have heard them performed, some time or other, in an agreeable place perhaps, or by an agreeable person, or accompanied with words that describe agreeable ideas; or we have heard them in our early years; a period of life, which we seldom look back upon without pleasure, and of which Bacon recommends the frequent recollection as an expedient to preserve health. Nor is it necessary, that such melodies or harmonies should have much intrinsick merit, or that they should call up any distinct remembrance of the agreeable ideas associated with them. There are seasons, at which we are gratified with very moderate excellence. In childhood, every tune is delightful to a musical ear; in our advanced years, an indifferent tune will please, when set off by the amiable qualities of the performer, or by any other agreeable circumstance. During the last war, the *Bellcisle march* was long a general favourite. It filled the minds of our people with magnificent ideas of armies, and conquest, and military splendour; for they believed it to be the

tune that was played by the French garrison when they marched out with the honours of war, and surrendered that fortress to the British troops. The flute of a shepherd, heard at a distance, in a fine summer day, amidst a beautiful scene of groves, hills, and waters, will give rapture to the ear of the wanderer, though the tune, the instrument, and the musician, be such as he could not endure in any other place. If a song, or piece of musick, should call up only a faint remembrance, that we were happy, the last time we heard it, nothing more would be needful to make us listen to it again with peculiar satisfaction.

It is an amiable prejudice that people generally entertain in favour of their national musick. This lowest degree of patriotism is not without its merit: and that man must have a hard heart, or dull imagination, in whom, though endowed with musical sensibility, no sweet emotions would arise, on hearing, in his riper years, or in a foreign land, those strains that were the delight of his childhood. What though they be inferiour to the Italian? What though they be even irregular and rude? It is not their merit, which in the case supposed would interest a native, but the charming ideas they would recal to his mind: ideas of innocence, simplicity, and leisure, of romantick

enterprise, and enthusiastick attachment; and of scenes, which, on recollection, we are inclined to think, that a brighter sun illuminated, a fresher verdure crowned, and purer skies and happier climes conspired to beautify, than are now to be seen in the dreary paths of care and disappointment, into which men, yielding to the passions peculiar to more advanced years, are tempted to wander. There are couplets in Ogilvie's Translation of Virgil, which I could never read without emotions far more ardent than the merit of the numbers would justify. But it was that book which first taught me "the tale of Troy divine," and first made me acquainted with poetical sentiments: and though I read it when almost an infant, it conveyed to my heart some pleasing impressions, that remain there unimpaired to this day.

There is a dance in Switzerland, which the young shepherds perform to a tune played on a sort of bagpipe. The tune is called *Rance des Vaches;* it is wild and irregular, but has nothing in its composition that could recommend it to our notice. But the Swiss are so intoxicated with this tune, that if at any time they hear it, when abroad in foreign service, they burst into tears; and often fall sick, and even die, of a passionate desire to revisit their native country: for which

reason, in some armies where they serve, the playing of this tune is prohibited. * This tune, having been the attendant of their childhood and early youth, recals to their memory those regions of wild beauty and rude magnificence, those days of liberty and peace, those nights of festivity, those happy assemblies, those tender passions, which formerly endeared to them their country, their homes, and their employments; and which, when compared with the scenes of uproar they are now engaged in, and the servitude they now undergo, awaken such regret as entirely overpowers them.

SECTION III.

Conjectures on some Peculiarities of National Musick.

THERE is a certain style of melody peculiar to each musical country, which the people of that country are apt to prefer to every other style. That they should prefer their own, is not surprising; and that the melody of one people should differ from that of another, is not more surpri-

* Rousseau. Dictionaire de Musique, art. *Rance des Vaches.*

sing, perhaps, than that the language of one people should differ from that of another. But there is something not unworthy of notice in the particular expression and style that characterise the musick of one nation or province, and distinguish it from every other sort of musick. Of this diversity Scotland supplies a striking example. The native melody of the highlands and western isles is as different from that of the southern part of the kingdom, as the Irish or Erse language is different from the English or Scotch. In the conclusion of a discourse on musick as it relates to the mind, it will not perhaps be impertinent to offer a conjecture on the cause of these peculiarities; which, though it should not (and indeed I am satisfied that it will not) fully account for one of them, may however incline the reader to think that they are not unaccountable, and may also throw some faint light on this part of philosophy.

Every thought that partakes of the nature of passion, has a correspondent expression in the look and gesture: and so strict is the union between the passion and its outward sign, that, where the former is not in some degree felt, the latter can never be perfectly natural, but, if assumed, becomes awkward mimickry, instead of

that genuine imitation of nature, which draws forth the sympathy of the beholder. If therefore, there be, in the circumstances of particular nations or persons, any thing that gives a peculiarity to their passions and thoughts, it seems reasonable to expect, that they will also have something peculiar in the expression of their countenance, and even in the form of their features. Caius Marius, Jugurtha, Tamerlane, and some other great warriours, are celebrated for a peculiar ferocity of aspect, which they had no doubt contracted from a perpetual and unrestrained exertion of fortitude, contempt and other violent emotions. These produced in the face their correspondent expressions, which being often repeated, became at last as habitual to the features, as the sentiments they arose from were to the heart. Savages, whose thoughts are little inured to control, have more of this significancy of look, than those men, who, being born and bred in civilized nations, are accustomed from their childhood to suppress every emotion that tends to interrupt the peace of society. And while the bloom of youth lasts, and the smoothness of feature peculiar to that period, the human face is less marked with any strong character, than in old age: a peevish or surly stripling may elude the eye of the physiognomist; but a wicked old

man, whose visage does not betray the evil temperature of his heart, must have more cunning than it would be prudent for him to acknowledge. Even by the trade or profession the human countenance may be characterised. They who employ themselves in the nicer mechanick arts, that require the earnest attention of the artist, do generally contract a fixedness of feature suited to that one uniform sentiment which engrosses them while at work. Whereas, other artists, whose work requires less attention, and who may ply their trade and amuse themselves with conversation at the same time, have for the most part smoother and more unmeaning faces: their thoughts are more miscellaneous, and therefore their features are less fixed in one uniform configuration. A keen penetrating look indicates thoughtfulness and spirit: a dull torpid countenance is not often accompanied with great sagacity.

This, though there may be many an exception, is in general true of the visible signs of our passions; and it is no less true of the audible. A man habitually peevish, or passionate or querulous, or imperious, may be known by the sound of his voice, as well as by his physiognomy. May we not go a step farther, and say, that if a man under the influence of any passion were to compose

a discourse, or a poem, or a tune, his work would in some measure exhibit an image of his mind? I could not easily be persuaded, that Swift and Juvenal were men of sweet tempers; or that Thomson, Arbuthnot, and Prior, were illnatured. The airs of Felton are so uniformly mournful, that I cannot suppose him to have been a merry, or even a cheerful man. If a musician, in deep affliction, were to attempt to compose a lively air, I believe he would not succeed: though I confess I do not well understand the nature of the connection that may take place between a mournful mind and a melancholy tune. It is easy to conceive, how a poet or an orator should transfuse his passions into his work: for every passion suggests ideas congenial to its own nature; and the composition of the poet, or of the orator, must necessarily consist of those ideas that occur at the time he is composing. But musical sounds are not the signs of ideas; rarely are they even the imitations of natural sounds; so that I am at a loss to conceive how it should happen, that a musician, overwhelmed with sorrow, for example, should put together a series of notes, whose expression is contrary to that of another series which he had put together when elevated with joy. But of the fact I am not doubtful; though I have not sagacity, or knowledge of musick, enough to be able

to explain it. And my opinion in this matter is warranted by that of a more competent judge; who says speaking of church voluntaries, that if the organist "do not feel in himself the divine "energy of devotion, he will labour in vain to "raise it in others. Nor can he hope to throw "out those happy instantaneous thoughts, which "sometimes far exceed the best concerted com- "positions, and which the enraptured performer "would gladly secure to his future use and pleas- "ure, did they not as fleetly escape as they arise."* A man who has made musick the study of his life, and is well acquainted with all the best examples of style and expression that are to be found in the works of former masters, may, by memory and much practice, attain a sort of mechanical dexterity in contriving musick suitable to any given passion; but such musick would, I presume, be vulgar and spiritless, compared to what an artist of genius throws out, when under the power of any ardent emotion. It is recorded of Lulli, that, once when his imagination was all on fire with some verses descriptive of terrible ideas, which he had been reading in a French tragedy, he ran to his harpsichord, and struck off such a

* Avison on Musical Expression, pages 88, 89.

combination of sounds, that the company felt their hair stand on end with horrour.

Let us therefore suppose it proved, or, if you please, take it for granted, that different sentiments in the mind of the musician will give different and peculiar expressions to his musick; and upon this principle, it will not perhaps be impossible to account for some of the phenomena of national ear.

The highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but in general a melancholy country. Long tracts of mountainous desert, covered with dark heath, and often obscured by misty weather; narrow valleys, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices resounding with the fall of torrents; a soil so rugged, and a climate so dreary, as in many parts to admit neither the amusements of pasturage, nor the labours of agriculture; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that intersect the country; the portentous noises which every change of the wind, and every increase and diminution of the waters, is apt to raise, in a lonely region, full of echoes, and rocks, and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape by the light of the moon: objects like these diffuse a gloom over the fancy, which may be compatible enough with occasional and social merriment, but cannot fail to tincture the thoughts

of a native in the hour of silence and solitude. If these people, notwithstanding their reformation in religion, and more frequent intercourse with strangers, do still retain many of their old superstitions, we need not doubt but in former times they must have been much more enslaved to the horrours of imagination, when beset with the bugbears of popery, and the darkness of paganism. Most of their superstitions are of a melancholy cast. That *second sight*, wherewith some of them are still supposed to be haunted, is considered by themselves as a misfortune, on account of the many dreadful images it is said to obtrude upon the fancy. I have been told, that the inhabitants of some of the Alpine regions do likewise lay claim to a sort of second sight. Nor is it wonderful, that persons of lively imagination, immured in deep solitude, and surrounded with the stupendous scenery of clouds, precipices, and torrents, should dream, even when they think themselves awake, of those few striking ideas with which their lonely lives are diversified: of corpses, funeral processions, and other objects of terrour; or of marriages, and the arrival of strangers, and such like matters of more agreeable curiosity.* Let it

* I do not find sufficient evidence for the reality of *second sight*, or at least of what is commonly understood

be observed also, that the ancient highlanders of Scotland had hardly any other way of supporting themselves, than by hunting, fishing, or war, professions that are continually exposed to fatal acci-

by that term. A treatise on the subject was published in the year 1762, in which many tales were told of persons, whom the author believed to have been favoured, or haunted, with these illuminations; but most of the tales were trifling and ridiculous; and the whole work betrayed on the part of the compiler such extreme credulity, as could not fail to prejudice many readers against his system. That any of these visionaries are liable to be swayed in their declarations by sinister views, I will not say; though a gentleman of character assured me, that one of them offered to sell him this unaccountable talent for half a crown. But this I think may be said with confidence, that none but ignorant people pretend to be gifted in this way. And in them it may be nothing more, perhaps, than short fits of sudden sleep or drowsiness attended with lively dreams, and arising from some bodily disorder, the effect of idleness, low spirits, or a gloomy imagination. For it is admitted, even by the most credulous highlanders, that, as knowledge and industry are propagated in their country, the second sight disappears in proportion: and nobody ever laid claim to this faculty, who was much employed in the intercourse of social life. Nor is it at all extraordinary, that one should have the appearance of being awake, and should even think one's self so, during these fits of dozing; or that they should come on suddenly, and

dents. And hence, no doubt, additional horrours would often haunt their solitude, and a deeper gloom overshadow the imagination even of the hardiest native.

while one is engaged in some business. The same thing happens to persons much fatigued, or long kept awake, who frequently fall asleep for a moment, or for a longer space, while they are standing, or walking, or riding on horseback. Add but a lively dream to this slumber, and (which is the frequent effect of disease) take away the consciousness of having been asleep; and a superstitious man, who is always hearing and believing tales of second sight, may easily mistake his dream for a waking vision: which however is soon forgotten when no subsequent occurrence recals it to his memory; but which, if it shall be thought to resemble any future event, exalts the poor dreamer into a highland prophet. This conceit makes him more recluse and more melancholy than ever, and so feeds his disease, and multiplies his visions; which, if they are not dissipated by business or society, may continue to haunt him as long as he lives: and which, in their progress through the neighbourhood, receive some new tincture of the marvellous from every mouth that promotes their circulation. As to the prophetical nature of this second sight, it cannot be admitted at all. That the Deity should work a second miracle, in order to give intimation of the frivolous things that these tales are made up of, the arrival of a stranger, the nailing of a coffin, or the colour of a suit of clothes; and that these intimations should be given for

What then would it be reasonable to expect from the fanciful tribe, from the musicians and poets, of such a region? Strains, expressive of joy, tranquillity, or the softer passions? No: their styles

no end, and to those persons only who are idle and solitary, who speak Erse, or who live among mountains and deserts, is like nothing in nature or providence that we are acquainted with; and must therefore, unless it were confirmed by satisfactory proof, (which is not the case) be rejected as absurd and incredible. The visions, such as they are, may reasonably enough be ascribed to a distempered fancy. And that in them, as well as in our ordinary dreams, certain appearances should, on some rare occasions, resemble certain events, is to be expected from the laws of chance; and seems to have in it nothing more marvellous or supernatural, than that the parrot, who deals out his scurrilities at random, should sometimes happen to salute the passenger by his right appellation.

But, whatever the reader may think of these remarks, or of their pertinency to the present subject, I am sure I shall not be blamed for quoting, from a poem, little known, the following very picturesque lines; which may show, that what in history or philosophy would make but an awkward figure, may sometimes have a charming effect in poetry.

E'er since of old the haughty Thanes of Ross
(So to the simple swain tradition tells)
Were wont, with clans and ready vassals throng'd,
To wake the bounding stag, or guilty wolf;
There oft is heard at midnight, or at noon,

Begin-

must have been better suited to their circumstances. And so we find in fact that their musick is. The wildest irregularity appears in its composition: the expression is warlike, and melancholy, and approaches even to the terrible. And that their poetry is almost uniformly mournful, and their views of nature dark and dreary, will be allowed by all who admit the authenticity of Ossian; and not doubted by any who believe those fragments of highland poetry to be genuine, which many old people, now alive, of that country, re-

Beginning faint, but rising still more loud
And nearer, voice of hunters and of hounds,
And horns, hoarse winded, blowing far and keen.
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs; the shouts of men,
And hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden, the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the tumult, and the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast he eyes
The mountain's height, and all the ridges round;
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns;
Nor knows, o'eraw'd and trembling as he stands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;
But wonders; and no end of wondering finds.

ALBANIA, a poem. London, 1737, folio.

member to have heard in their youth, and were then taught to refer to a pretty high antiquity.

Some of the southern provinces of Scotland present a very different prospect. Smooth and lofty hills covered with verdure; clear streams winding through long and beautiful valleys; trees produced without culture, here straggling or single, and there crowding into little groves and bowers; with other circumstances peculiar to the districts I allude to, render them fit for pasturage, and favourable to romantick leisure and tender passions. Several of the old Scotch songs take their names from the rivulets, villages, and hills, adjoining to the Tweed near Melrose;* a region distinguished by many charming varieties of rural scenery, and which, whether we consider the face of the country, or the genius of the people, may properly enough be termed the Arcadia of Scotland. And all these songs are sweetly and powerfully expressive of love and tenderness, and other emotions suited to the tranquillity of pastoral life.

It is a common opinion, that these songs were composed by David Rizzio, a musician from Italy, the unfortunate favourite of a very unfortunate queen. But this must be a mistake. The style of

* Cowdenknows, Galashiels, Galawater, Etterick Banks, Braes of Yarrow, Bush above Traquair, &c.

the Scotch musick was fixed before his time; for many of the best of these tunes are ascribed by tradition to a more remote period. And it is not to be supposed, that he, a foreigner, and in the latter part of his life a man of business, could have acquired or invented a style of musical composition so different in every respect from that to which he had been accustomed in his own country. *Melody* is so much the characteristick of the Scotch tunes, that I doubt whether even basses were set to them before the present century; whereas, in the days of Rizzio *harmony* was the fashionable study of the Italian composers. Palestina himself, who flourished about two hundred and fifty years ago, and who has obtained the high title of father of harmony, is by a great master* ranked with those who neglected air, and were too closely attached to counterpoint; and at the time when Rizzio was a student in the art, Palestina's must have been the favourite musick in Italy. Besides, though the style of the old Scotch melody has been well imitated by Mr. Oswald, and some other natives, I do not find that any foreigner has ever caught the true spirit of it. Geminiani, a great and original genius in this art, and a professed admirer of the Scotch songs,

* Avison on Musical Expression, p. 46. 51.

(some of which he published with accompaniments) used to say, that he had blotted many a quire of paper to no purpose, in attempting to compose a second strain to that fine little air which in Scotland is known by the name of *The broom of Cowdenknows*. To all which we may add, that Tassoni, the author of *La Secchia rapita*, speaks of this musick as well esteemed by the Italians of his time, and ascribes the invention of it to James king of Scotland: which a foreigner might naturally do, as all the Scotch kings of that name, particularly the first, third, fourth, and fifth, were skilled both in musick and poetry.

But though I admit Tassoni's testimony as a proof, that the Scotch musick is more ancient than Rizzio, I do not think him right in what he says of its inventor. Nor can I acquiesce in the opinion of those who give the honour of this invention to the monks of Melrose. I rather believe, that it took its rise, among men who were real shepherds, and who actually felt the sentiments and affections, whereof it is so very expressive. Rizzio may have been one of the first, perhaps, who made a collection of these songs; or he may have played them with more delicate touches than the Scotch musicians of that time; or perhaps corrected the extravagance of certain passages; for one is struck with the regularity of

some, as well as amused with the wildness of others: and in all or any of those cases, it might be said with truth, that the Scotch musick is under obligations to him: but that this style of pastoral melody, so unlike the Italian, and in every respect so peculiar, should have been established or invented by him, is incredible; nay, (if it were worth while to assert any thing so positively on such a subject) we might even say impossible.

The acknowledged and unequalled excellence of the Italian musick, is one of those phenomena of a national taste, that may in part be accounted for. Let us recollect some particulars of the history of that period, when this musick began to recommend itself to general notice.

Leo the tenth, and some of his immediate predecessors, had many great vices and some virtues; and we at this day feel the good effects of both; for Providence has been pleased, in this instance, as in many others, to bring good out of evil, and to accomplish the most glorious purposes, by means that seemed to have an opposite tendency. The profusion, and other more scandalous qualities of Leo, were instrumental in hastening forward the reformation: to his liberality and love of art we owe the finest pictures, the finest musical compositions, and some of the finest poems in the world.

The sixteenth century does indeed great honour to Italian genius. The ambition of Alexander the sixth, and Julius the second, had raised the papal power to higher eminence, and settled it on a firmer foundation, than had been known before their time. Leo, therefore, had leisure to indulge his love of luxury and of art; and the Italians, under his administration, to cultivate the arts and sciences, which many other favourable events conspired to promote. Printing had been lately found out; the taking of Constantinople by the Turks had made a dispersion of the learned, many of whom took refuge in Italy: Leo found, in the treasures accumulated by Julius the second, and in the ample revenues of the pontificate, the means both of generosity and of debauchery: and when the pope, and the houses of Medici and Montefeltro, had set the example, it became the fashion all over Italy, to patronise genius, and encourage learning. The first efforts of a literary spirit appeared in translating of the Greek authors into Latin; a tongue which every scholar was ambitious to acquire, and in which many elegant compositions, both verse and prose, were produced about this time in Italy. Fracastorius, Sanazarius, Vida, distinguished themselves in Latin poetry; Bembo, Casa, Manutius, Sigonius, in Latin prose. But genius seldom

displays itself to advantage in a foreign tongue. The cultivation of the Tuscan language, since the time of Petrarcha, who flourished one hundred and fifty years before the period we speak of, had been too much neglected; but was now resumed with the most desirable success, particularly by Tasso and Ariosto, who carried the Italian poetry to its highest perfection.

The other fine arts were no less fortunate in the hands of Raphael and Palestina. What Homer was in poetry, these authors were in painting and musick. Their works are still regarded as standards of good taste, and models for imitation: and though improvement may no doubt have been made since their time, in some inferiour branches of their respective arts, particularly in what regards delicacy of manner; it may with reason be doubted, whether in grandeur of design, and strength of invention, they have as yet been excelled or equalled. Greece owed much of her literary glory to the merit of her ancient authors. They at once fixed the fashion in the several kinds of writing; and they happened to fix it on the immovable basis of simplicity and nature. Had not the Italian musick in its infant state fallen into the hands of a great genius like Palestina, it would not have arrived at maturity so soon. A long succession of inferiour composers might

have made discoveries in the art, but could not have raised it above mediocrity: and such people are not of influence enough to render a new art respectable in the eyes either of the learned or of the vulgar. But Palestina made his art an object of admiration, not only to his own country, but to a great part of Europe. In England he was studied and imitated by Tallis, in the reign of Henry the eighth. All good judges were satisfied, that this system of harmony was founded on right principles; and that though it might perhaps be improved, nothing in the art could be a real improvement which was contradictory to it.

In the age of Leo, a genius like Palestina must have been distinguished, even though the art he professed had gratified no important principle of the human mind; but as his art gratified the religious principle, he could not fail, in those days, and among Italians, to meet with the highest encouragement. In fact, musick since that time has been cultivated in Italy with the utmost attention and success. Scarlatti, Corelli, Geminiani, Martini, Marcello, were all men of extraordinary abilities; and any one of them, in the circumstances of Palestina, might perhaps have been as eminent as he. Need we wonder, then, at the unequalled excellence of the Italian musick?

But other causes have contributed to this effect. Nobody who understands the language of modern Italy will deny, that the natives have a peculiar delicacy of perception in regard to vocal sound. This delicacy appears in the sweetness of their verse, in the cadence of their prose, and even in the formation and inflection of their words. Whether it be owing to the climate or to the influence of the other arts; whether it be derived from their Gothick ancestors, or from their more remote forefathers of ancient Rome; whether it be the effect of weakness or of soundness in the vocal and auditory organs of the people, this national niceness of ear must be considered as one cause of the melody both of their speech and of their musick. They are mistaken who think the Italian an effeminate language. Soft it is indeed, and of easy modulation, but susceptible withal of the utmost dignity of sound, as well as of elegant arrangement and nervous phrascology. In history and oratory, it may boast of many excellent models: and its poetry is far superiour to that of every other modern nation, except the English. And if it be true, that all musick is originally song, the most poetical nation would seem to have the fairest chance to become the most musical. The Italian tongue, in strength and variety of harmony, is not superiour, and perhaps not equal, to the English; but, abounding more

in vowels and liquid sounds, and being therefore more easily articulated, is fitter for the purposes of musick: and it deserves our notice, that poetical numbers were brought to perfection in Italy two hundred years sooner than in any other country of modern Europe.

CHAPTER VII.

Of Sympathy.

As a great part of the pleasure we derive from poetry depends on our sympathetick feelings, the philosophy of sympathy ought always to form a part of the science of criticism. On this subject, therefore, I beg leave to subjoin a few brief remarks, that may possibly throw light on some of the foregoing, as well as subsequent reasonings.

When we consider the condition of another person, especially if it seem to be pleasurable or painful, we are apt to fancy ourselves in the same condition, and to feel in some degree the pain or pleasure that we think we should feel if we were really in that condition. Hence the good of others becomes in some measure our good, and their evil our evil; the obvious effect of which is, to bind men more closely together in society, and prompt them to promote the good, and relieve the distresses of one another. Sympathy with distress is called compassion or pity: sympathy with happiness has no particular name; but when

expressed in words to the happy person, is termed congratulation.

We sympathize, in some degree, even with things inanimate. To lose a staff we have long worn, to see in ruins a house in which we have long lived, may affect us with a momentary concern, though in point of value the loss be nothing. With the dead we sympathize, and even with those circumstances of their condition whereof we know that they are utterly insensible; such as, their being shut up in a cold and solitary grave, excluded from the light of the sun, and from all the pleasures of life, and liable in a few years to be forgotten for ever. Towards the brute creation our sympathy is, and ought to be, strong, they being percipient creatures like ourselves. A merciful man is merciful to his beast; and that person would be deemed melancholy or hard-hearted, who should see the frisking lamb, or hear the cheerful song of the lark, or observe the transport of the dog when he finds the master he had lost, without any participation of their joy. There are few passages of descriptive poetry into which we enter with a more hearty fellow feeling, than where Virgil and Lucretius paint so admirably, the one the sorrow of a steer for the loss of his fellow, the other the affliction of a cow

deprived of her calf.* But our sympathy exerts itself most powerfully towards our fellow men; and, other circumstances being equal, is stronger or weaker, according as they are more or less nearly connected with us, and their condition more or less similar to our own.

We often sympathize with one another, when the person principally concerned has little sense of either good or evil. We blush for another's illbreeding, even when we know that he himself is not aware of it. We pity a madman, though we believe him to be happy in his frenzy. We tremble for a mason standing on a high scaffold, though we know that custom has made it quite familiar to him. It gives us pain to see another on the brink of a precipice, though we be secure ourselves, and have no doubt of his circumspection. In these cases, it would seem, that our sympathy is raised, not so much by our reflecting on what others really feel, as by a lively conception of what they would feel if their nature were exactly such as ours; or of what we ourselves should feel, if we were in their condition, with the same sentiments we have at present.†

Many of our passions may be communicated

* Virgil, Georg. iii. vers. 519.; Lucretius, ii. vers. 355.
† See Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, sect. 1

and strengthened by sympathy. If we go into a cheerful company, we become cheerful; if into a mournful one, we become sad. The presence of a great multitude engaged in devotion, tends to make us devout. Cowards have behaved valiantly, when all their companions were valiant; and the timidity of a few has struck a panick into a whole army. We are not, however, much inclined to sympathize with violent anger, jealousy, envy, malevolence, and other sanguinary or unnatural passions: we rather take part against them, and sympathize with those persons who are in danger from them; because we can more easily enter into their distress, and suppose ourselves in their condition. But indignation at vice, particularly at ingratitude, cruelty, treachery, and the like, when we are well acquainted with the case, awakens in us a most intense fellow feeling: and the satisfaction we are conscious of, when such crimes are adequately punished, though somewhat stern and gloomy, is however sincere, and by no means dishonourable or detrimental to our moral nature; nor at all inconsistent with that pity which the sufferings of the criminal extort from us, when we are made to conceive them in a lively manner.

Of sympathy all men are not equally susceptible. They who have a lively imagination, keen feelings, and what we call a tender heart, are

most subject to it. Habits of attention, the study of the works of nature, and of the best performances in art, experience of adversity, the love of virtue and of mankind, tend greatly to cherish it; and those passions whereof self is the object, as pride, selfconceit, the love of money, sensuality, envy, vanity, have a tendency no less powerful to destroy it. Nothing renders a man more amiable, or more useful, than a disposition to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep; to enter heartily, not officiously, into the concerns of his fellow creatures; to comply with the innocent humour of his company, more attentive to them than to himself, and to avoid every occasion of giving pain or offence. And nothing but downright immorality is more disagreeable, than that person is, who affects bluntness of manner, and would be thought at all times to speak all that he thinks, whether people take it well or ill; or than those pedants are, of whatever profession (for we have them of all professions), who, without minding others, or entering into their views of things, are continually obtruding themselves upon the conversation, and their own concerns, and the sentiments and language peculiar to their own trades and fraternities. This behaviour, though under the name of plain dealing it may arrogate a superiority to artificial rules, is gene-

rally the effect of pride, ignorance, or stupidity, or rather of all the three in conjunction. A modest man, who sympathetically attends to the condition and sentiments of others, will of his own accord make those allowances in their favour, which he wishes to be made in his own; and will think it as much his duty to promote their happiness, as he thinks it theirs to promote his. And such a man is well principled in equity, as well as in goodbreeding: and though, from an imperfect knowledge of forms, or from his having had but few opportunities to put them in practice, his manner may not be so graceful, or so easy, as could be wished, he will never give offence to any person of penetration and goodnature.

With feelings which we do not approve, or have not experienced, we are not apt to sympathize. The distress of the miser when his hoard is stolen, of the fop when he soils his fine jubilee clothes, of the vaunting coxcomb when his lies are detected, of the unnatural parent when his daughter escapes with a deserving lover, is more likely to move laughter than compassion. At Sparta, every father had the privilege of correcting any child; he who had experience of paternal tenderness being supposed incapable of wounding a parent's sensibility by unjust or rigorous chastisement. When the cardinal of Milan would ex-

postulate with the Lady Constance upon her violent sorrow for the loss of her child, she answers, but without deigning to address her answer to one who she knew could be no competent judge of her case, "He speaks to me who never had a son."* The Greeks and Romans were as eminent for publick spirit, and for parental affection, as we; but for a reason elsewhere assigned,† knew little of that romantick love between unmarried persons, which modern manners and novels have a tendency to inspire. Accordingly the distress in their tragedies often arose from patriotism, and from the conjugal and filial charities, but not from the romantick passion whereof we now speak. But there are few English tragedies, and still fewer French, wherein some love affair is not connected with the plot. This always raises our sympathy; but would not have been so interesting to the Greeks or Romans, because they were not much acquainted with the refinements of this passion.

Sympathy, as the means of conveying certain feelings from one breast to another, might be made a powerful instrument of moral discipline, if poets and other writers of fable, were careful

* King John, act 3. scene 3.

† Essay on Laughter, chap. 4.

to call forth our sensibility towards those emotions only that favour virtue and invigorate the human mind. Fictions that breathe the spirit of patriotism or valour; that make us sympathize with the parental, conjugal, or filial charities; that recommend misfortune to our pity, or expose crimes to our abhorrence, may certainly be used in a moral view, by cherishing passions, that while they improve the heart, can hardly be indulged to excess. But those dreadful tales, that only give anguish to the reader, can never do any good: they fatigue, enervate, and overwhelm the soul: and when the calamities they describe are made to fall upon the innocent, our moral principles are in some danger of a temporary depravation from the perusal, whatever resemblance the fable may be supposed to bear to the events of real life. Some late authors of fiction seem to have thought it incumbent upon them, not only to touch the heart, but to tear it in pieces. They heap "misfortune on misfortune, grief on grief," without end, and without mercy: which discomposes the reader too much to give him either pleasure or improvement; and is contrary to the practice of the wiser ancients, whose most pathetick scenes were generally short.

It is said, that at the first representation of *the Furies* of Eschylus, the horrour of the spectacle

was so great, that several women miscarried; which was indeed pathos with a vengeance. But though the truth of that story should be questioned, it admits of no doubt, that objects of grief and horrour too much enlarged on by the poet or novelist may do more harm than good, and give more pain than pleasure, to the mind of the reader. Surely this must be contrary to the essential rules of art, whether we consider poetry as intended to please that it may instruct, or to instruct that it may the more effectually please. And supposing the real evils of life to be as various and important as is commonly believed, we must be thought to consult our interest very absurdly, if we seek to torment ourselves with imaginary misfortune. Horace insinuates, that the ancient *satirick drama* (a sort of burlesque tragi-comedy) was contrived for the entertainment of the more disorderly part of the audience;* and our criticks assure us, that the modern farce is addressed to the upper gallery, where it is supposed, there is no great relish for the sublime graces of the tragick muse. Yet I believe these *little pieces*, if consistent with decency, will be found neither unpleasant nor unprofitable even to the most learned spectator. A

* Hor. Ar. Poet. vers. 221.

man, especially if advanced in years, would not choose to go home with that gloom upon his mind which an affecting tragedy is intended to diffuse: and if the play has conveyed any sound instruction, there is no risk of its being dissipated by a little innocent mirth.

Upon the same principle, I confess, that I am not offended with those comick scenes wherewith our great dramatick poet has occasionally thought proper to diversify his tragedies. Such a licence will at least be allowed to be more pardonable in him, than it would be in other tragick poets. They must make their way to the heart, as an army does to a strong fortification, by slow and regular approaches; because they cannot, like Shakspeare, take it at once and by storm. In their pieces, therefore, a mixture of comedy might have as bad an effect, as if besiegers were to retire from the outworks they had gained, and leave the enemy at leisure to fortify them a second time. But Shakspeare penetrates the heart by a single effort, and can make us as sad in the present scene, as if we had not been merry in the former. With such powers as he possessed in the pathetick, if he had made his tragedies uniformly mournful or terrible from beginning to end, no person of sensibility would have been able to support the representation. As to the pro-

bability of these mixed compositions, it admits of no doubt. Nature every where presents a similar mixture of tragedy and comedy, of joy and sorrow, of laughter and solemnity, in the common affairs of life. The servants of a court know little of what passes among princes and statesmen, and may therefore, like the porter in Macbeth, be very jocular when their superiours are in deep distress. The death of a favourite child is a great affliction to parents and friends; but the man who digs the grave may, like Goodman Delver in Hamlet, be very cheerful while he is going about his work. A conspiracy may be dangerous; but the constable who apprehends the traitors may, like Dogberry, be a ludicrous character, and his very absurdities may be instrumental in bringing the plot to light, as well as in delaying or hastening forward the discovery. I grant that compositions, like those I would now apologize for, cannot properly be called either tragedies or comedies: but the name is of no consequence; let them be called *Plays:* and if in them nature is imitated in such a way as to give pleasure and instruction, they are as well entitled to the denomination of *dramatick poems*, as any thing in Sophocles, Racine, or Voltaire. But to return:

Love is another "tyrant of the throbbing breast," of whom they who wish to see the stage

transformed into a school of virtue, complain, that his influence in the modern drama is too despotical. Love, kept within due bounds, is no doubt, as the song says, "a gentle and a generous passion;" but no other passion has so strong a tendency to transgress the due bounds: and the frequent contemplation of its various ardours and agonies, as exhibited in plays and novels, can scarce fail to enervate the mind, and to raise emotions and sympathies unfriendly to innocence. And certain it is, that fables in which there is neither love nor gallantry, may be made highly interesting even to the fancy and affections of a modern reader. This appears, not only from the writings of Shakspeare, and other great authors, but from the *Pilgrim's Progress* of Bunyan, and the history of Robinson Crusoe: than which last, there is not perhaps in any language a more interesting narrative; or a tale better contrived for communicating to the reader a lively idea of the importance of the mechanick arts, of the sweets of social life, and of the dignity of independence.